

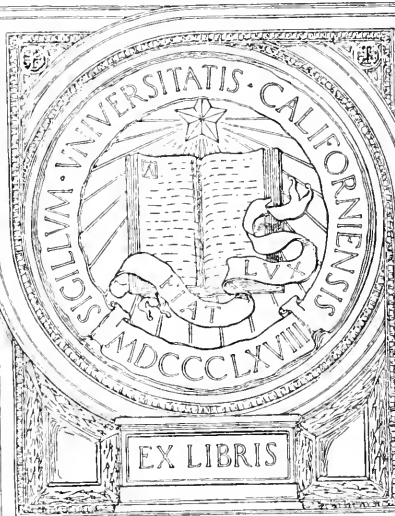
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# THE SYMPHONY SINCE BEETHOVEN







*John Wenzelberger.*



# THE SYMPHONY SINCE BEETHOVEN

BY

FELIX WEINGARTNER

(CONDUCTOR OF THE ROYAL SYMPHONY CONCERTS,  
BERLIN, AND OF THE KAIM ORCHESTRA,  
MUNICH)

*Translated from the second German edition  
(with the author's permission)*

BY

MAUDE BARROWS DUTTON

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TRANSLATION  
OF THE  
AUTOGRAPH LETTER

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London, April 19, 1904.

Miss Maude Barrows Dutton.

Your translation of "The Symphony Since Beethoven" has been very highly praised by one of my friends who is familiar with English, and I am glad to give you my permission to publish it.

Yours most respectfully,

FELIX WEINGARTNER.

(REPRODUCTION OF WEINGARTNER'S AUTOGRAPH LETTER.)

Min

Maudie Barrows Dutton

Verehrtes Fräulein!

Ihre Übersetzung der „Symphonie nach Beethoven“ ist mir von einem des Englischen lernenden Freunde sehr wohl worden, und  
wäre ich Ihnen gerne  
die Erlaubnis, die zu  
veröffentlichen.

Mit vorzüglichen Hochachtung

Rich. Weingartner.

Baker-T.

1920



## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

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THE necessity of getting out a second edition of this book two years after the publication of the first is a gratifying proof to me that the thoughts expressed therein did not fall upon unfruitful soil, although nothing was done for their dissemination. The present edition differs from the first, primarily in being more carefully finished in style, and furthermore in a greater precision, to obtain which some wordy passages have been struck out and some supplementary ones have been added. No reader of this edition will suffer under the false impression that I consider the further development of the symphony impossible and speak a good word for programme music only. It is incomprehensible to me how any one could have read this idea into the first edition.

There have been complaints, also, that I have overlooked composers. Especially in Paris, where the little book has become known through the translation made by Madame Chevillard, has this criticism been raised against me. Although more names are spoken of here than before, still there are of course many deserving artists who are not mentioned. My book is not a catalogue, and no one should expect to find in it just what he would in the latter.

Finally, the question is often put to me with no

## Preface to the Second Edition

little wit, why I, after writing this book, should have composed two symphonies, and what was my aim in doing this. I will take the trouble here to answer this query with corresponding wit. Aim had I none. Both symphonies were written simply because they came to me.

FELIX WEINGARTNER.

MUNICH, *December*, 1900.



## THE SYMPHONY SINCE BEETHOVEN

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IF in wandering through some Alpine valley, while we were standing awestruck before a colossal mountain, whose snow-crowned peak rose shimmering in the distance, and we were perhaps deeming that man happy whose courage and strength were great enough to carry him over this peak to enjoy the view beyond, when suddenly our meditations were interrupted by a voice at our side saying in all seriousness, "I am going to climb over that mountain into the blue clouds beyond," we would have little doubt but that we were confronted either by a foolhardy dreamer or a madman. We would scarcely ridicule the man, but rather look upon his simple faith with eyes of pity.

Such a feeling of pity can also seize upon us, when we come into the full consciousness of Beethoven's greatness, when our whole being becomes filled with the infinitely deep significance of his compositions, and then meet so many young composers who are striving under the title of symphony to win for themselves money or reputation.

Compared with the inexhaustible wealth of emotion and thought that Beethoven gave us through his music, compared with his expression of that world of feelings which embraces the most pow-

## The Symphony since Beethoven

erful passions and the tenderest feelings of love, the deepest humor and metaphysical transportations, it must at first seem like a foolhardy if not an insane undertaking. — like the dream of the man who would climb the impassable mountain, — where works to-day are written in the same form as Beethoven's symphonies. Richard Wagner, not only the greatest musician but also the greatest musical critic of the last half-century, pours out his bitterest satire on the symphony-writers since Beethoven. He is astonished that composers saw in Beethoven's creations only the finished form and gaily went on writing more symphonies without observing that the "last" symphony, Beethoven's Ninth, had been given to the world; without observing that in this symphony lay the extreme emanation of music as a separate art, as a direct transition to collective art, — by which he means works which are freed from all vagueness by their artistic finish, — and that with its birth the right of existence of all other symphonies had in itself to fail. Wagner considered, at the same time, the "Ninth Symphony" as a precursor of his own lifework, and characterized Beethoven's great tone-poem as working a reform in his mind. Although I have referred to Wagner's broader treatment of this subject in "Opera and Drama," I wish to state clearly, here at the beginning of this treatise, that on this point I am not agreed with Wagner. A nature like his, that with such incredible energy sought to reach its highest goal, and did reach it, as he was able to do, must finally look at all else in the light of this

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goal, and lose to a certain extent that objectivity which distinguishes other great men, who are not in this sense revolutionary, as for instance Goethe.

The question next arises: What indeed can be said of a form which stands there complete in itself, which in relation to its own parts, even in case of a change of key, seems almost immovably placed under rule; of a form which after a master had filled it with such wonderful content that it proved too small, so that he in the end, after he had expressed the vastness of his soul in it, broke its fetters forever, as Beethoven did in the last movement of his "Ninth Symphony," as well as in his last sonatas and quartets? We may question further if it is not the love of experimentation, and no longer the art impulse, which leads a composer to gather up the débris of form which Beethoven's genius snapped asunder and seek to bring them together again into a perfect whole. In fact, we may justly ask if such composers are capable of conceiving Beethoven's immortal greatness. In opposition to this, it must be emphatically asserted that Beethoven, after he had once deserted the usual form, did not always continue to do so. He in no wise wished his act to be interpreted as the laying down of a deliberate principle. The sonata, Opus 101, which is like a free fantasia, is followed by the monumental Opus 106, which in its four gigantic movements is perfectly rounded off as to form; the sonatas in E-major and A-flat major, even freer in their form, are followed by the last one in C-minor, which, if one overlooks the omission of the customary quick-moving finale, is so

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complete in form that Bülow could justly point it out as a model of its kind. The two quartets in B-flat major and C-sharp minor stand between the two in E-flat major and A-minor, which in form do not deviate in the least from earlier quartets. At any rate, it is clear that Beethoven left the accustomed form only when the arrangement of the entire work required it,—as, for example, guided by his inspiration, he introduced the choral part, with Schiller's words, into his "Ninth Symphony,"—and that he in no wise treated the form as obsolete, although at times he stepped beyond its bounds. Face to face with these examples we can justly conjecture, although we can never know, whether Beethoven if he had lived would have written another symphony in the old form. Wagner by his hypothesis of the *last* symphony seems to consider it improbable. We can more easily answer the question, whether in the present day when we see a composer heap up an immense pile of abnormal instrumental and perhaps vocal music in order to produce tone-pictures surpassing the old form, if it here also was really the deliberate intention and not perchance only the mass of average work which wore out the form, and if that mass of average work did not correspond to the creative power which produced the compositions. If so, no Phoenix will fly forth from the ashes of the cooling débris of form, but, on the contrary, a thick, strange liquor will ooze forth from the broken vessel and fall heavily to the ground. On the other hand, in case of a truly significant work, a truly inspired work which has withstood victori-

## Beethoven

ously the duly assigned struggle with contemporary shortsightedness, one will recognize in its form and instrumentation, if they do not deviate too greatly from the customary, only the necessary means for the embodiment of the composer's inspiration. We will no longer measure such a work by the old laws, but will seek to deduce new laws from it.

‘No musical form has developed from its origin to its incontestable zenith within such a remarkably short time as the symphony. The song, for example, although it found its first great master early in this century, is still discovering through the blending of words and music, which have each in their own way adapted themselves to the melodious character of the song, new outlets for itself, so that many a song written since Schubert's death may fear nothing from a comparison with those of this immortal singer. For the musical drama, through Richard Wagner's reformatory deed, innumerable ways now stand open which depend only upon the choice and the poetical elaboration of the subject. And now we must remember that Haydn wrote his first symphony about the year 1760, and that in 1823, only sixty-three years later, those harmless, playfully joyous creations had gloriously developed into the grandest of tragedies, and Beethoven's “Ninth Symphony” had come into being. More than three-quarters of a century have passed between the appearance of that wonderful creation and to-day, and still in the realm of symphonies it wears, undisputed, the crown. But as in all spheres of life we ob-

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serve that a temporary retrogression, often a complete decline, follows the highest development, so I believe that nature here, after she had produced Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, men of immortal greatness, needed a period of comparative rest after the overpowering strain. Productive power has turned towards the opera, the musical drama, and borne its ripest fruit thus far in Richard Wagner. But who can therefore conclude that "music is going over into the collective arts," and consequently that the symphony, as well as music in general, is losing its right of existence as a separate art? All further development depends solely on the birth of the ruling genius, which can neither be foreseen nor predicted, and when it does come will cast all calculations to the winds. And if we cannot know with what contents a future composer will fill the symphonic form, so is it equally wrong to lay the blame of the degeneration of symphonic productions since Beethoven to the forms being obsolete. Wagner himself seems to take back, partially at least, what he pronounced so harshly in "Opera and Drama," in that in his treatise "Upon the Application of Music to the Drama" (Volume X. of his collected works) he acknowledges, under certain conditions, the possibility of a symphony being written about which "something too might be said."

In order to reach a comprehensive view of this heretofore only suggested possibility, we will wish to run through, here briefly, there more extensively, the chief works which have been produced in the line of symphonies.

## Haydn

Haydn becomes acquainted with the sonatas of Philip Emanuel Bach, — freer, more worldly forms of the suites of his great father, — and creates similar compositions for the private orchestras of nobles in whose service he is employed as musical director. Masterpieces, of which a large number will never grow old, but will so charm us by their youthful freshness that we always believe we are hearing them for the first time, sprang from his sunny, childlike nature. Mozart's nature was of greater depth than Haydn's. Treated in the struggle for existence much more roughly, — much too roughly, — so that his delicate body was soon worn out, he shows many a time in his compositions the seriousness that hung over his life. The gentle melancholy of the G-minor symphony, the harsh severity of the C-major, the partly majestic, partly heartfelt earnestness in the first two movements of the E-flat major, are characteristic features of Mozart's work, but quite foreign to Haydn's instrumental compositions. But his individuality reveals itself particularly in the opera. The strains which he intones in the last scene of "Don Giovanni," and in the "Magic Flute," the prophecy of power in his treatment of the orchestra in "Figaro," are not found in his symphonies. Beethoven, also, in his first two symphonies depends on his predecessors. Had he died after the completion of his symphony in D-major, no one would have had a suspicion of his actual genius. Then came a miracle. A great personality in the political world, the First Consul of the French Republic, inspired the young musician. He felt

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called to celebrate his deeds in a great tone-poem, and — as Athene once sprang from the head of Zeus — the “Eroica Symphony” burst from the soul of Beethoven. No other artist ever took such a gigantic stride as Beethoven did between his second and third symphony. He felt in the depth of his great being that the ideal life, freed from the dross of humanity, I might say the true life of a hero, the fruits of his labors, and the full appreciation of his worth, comes only after his death. So Beethoven shows us, only in the first movement, the hero himself, in his wrestlings and struggles, and in the full glory of victory. As early as the second movement, sounds forth the majestic lament for his death. In the third, that remarkably short scherzo, is given a picture of the human race, busy one day as another with itself, hurrying by all that is sublime with jesting or indifference, or at most commemorating the hero’s deeds with a resounding fanfare. In the last movement the peoples come together from the ends of the earth, bringing building-stones for a worthy monument to the now fully recognized hero, — a monument which cannot be more beautiful than is the love paid to his memory. This movement surpasses the first two in its boldness of conception and in its polyphonic working-out, and makes the so greatly admired fugue-finale in Mozart’s “Jupiter Symphony” seem like a child’s toy. When at last the veil falls from the monument, when the strains of the consecration music arise, and all eyes filled with tears look up at the image of the deified hero, then ring upon our ears the sounds that tell us



that with this symphony, music has learned to speak a language for which it hitherto seemed to possess no organ.

How Beethoven strode further from one wonderful work to another and finally crowned all his efforts with the "Ninth Symphony," — who does not linger gladly there! But I will not speak to you of Beethoven himself, but of those who came after him. Perhaps I have already diverged too far from my real theme; but, as in wandering through the mountains, — to hold to the simile in the beginning of this treatise, — when we know that the majestic snow peak, upon which we have gazed spellbound, will vanish at the next turn in the path, it is a temptation to linger there and enjoy its splendor to the very last, so here I felt that I must needs say a few words about one of Beethoven's works before he fades from our horizon to be visible later only in the far distance.

Turning now completely away from our gigantic peak to the surrounding neighborhood, we find many a pleasant range of hills, and many a romantic cliff, that can fascinate and charm us to no small degree. Such is the case also with the symphonies written since Beethoven, as far as it is a question of the customary symphonic form. We will find in them beauty and worth, but to appreciate them we must turn completely away from Beethoven.

Close to Beethoven, rather his contemporary than his successor, there appears a wonderful musician, Franz Schubert. Probably no other

## The Symphony since Beethoven

musician was ever gifted with such a wealth of pure melodic imagination, with such an abundance of musical invention, combined with the deepest and tenderest sincerity of soul. If we find whenever we are allowed to look into the workshops of Beethoven's mind, a powerful wrestling, a working, conscious of its goal, for the final musical expression of his genius, so we see Schubert's fancies springing and bubbling forth from an inexhaustible fountain. The great number of his works in comparison with the years of his life astounds us. He died at thirty-one, but he has written much more than the other masters. His entire being was saturated with music. He went on and on composing, writing down his fancies without sifting or polishing. Thus he was of a lovable, serene disposition, a thoroughly genial Viennese who easily surmounted embarrassments. The miserable condition of his poverty-stricken life could not silence the godlike voice in his soul.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I may here relate an anecdote of Schubert which was told me in the year 1887, by Franz Lachner of Munich, who was a friend of Schubert in his early years. One fine day Lachner had asked Schubert to make an excursion with him into the country. Schubert wanted very much to go, but was unable, as he had not a cent in his pocket. As Lachner was not much better off, the embarrassment was all the greater. So Schubert gave Lachner a book of songs in manuscript, asking him to take it to his publisher and to ask for the fee in it. He said he did not like to embarrass himself, for he had been refused so often. The publisher, Lachner named Diabelli, proved very much averse to taking anything more by that Schubert, saying there was no call for his songs. At last, however, he consented, and gave the magnificent sum of five florins for the manuscript. The two friends went on their excursion, happy as kings, and finding a spinet in a country inn, Schubert at once played several songs to Lachner, which had occurred to him on the way. Unfortunately, Lachner could not remember exactly which they were, but he assured me there was one of them which is now among the most celebrated of Schubert's songs.

## Schubert

This fabulous productivity of Schubert's had of course this disadvantage, that often insignificant and superficial music, which would not be worthy of preservation, came from his pen. Indeed, one must count half his compositions as such, but those of his works that far exceed mediocrity place him for all time in the ranks of the great masters. I read recently in a work on one of the newer composers, that this musician could not really be called a genius because he had not enriched music with any new forms. How little of a genius Schubert must then have been who, in truth, presented us with no new forms, but instead filled the old ones with extremely rich and individual contents!

Schubert was the lyric singer, *κατ' ἐξοχήν*. What he wrote, the most joyous as well as the most tragic, seems to have been imbued always with that gentle, melodious element that causes his figure to appear, as it were, through tears of gentle emotion. A happy warmth floods his music. Think of the great symphony in C-major. Schubert himself probably never heard it, and we must realize with horror that it would have remained unknown if Robert Schumann had not discovered it in Vienna, not long after Schubert's death. How grand it stands before us in its four glorious movements! — the first swelling with life and strength, the second a gipsy romance with the wonderful secret horn motive (the heavenly guest, as Schumann so beautifully expressed it), the splendid scherzo, and the finale filled with gigantic humor. No worked-up harmonic effects, no polyphonic combinations, awaken our interest, and yet

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this work, lasting in performance over an hour without break, — which is quite unusual for a symphony, — is able to fascinate us and carry us along with it. It is quite incomprehensible to me how, in the presence of such a direct expression of truly divine power, there are always those people who find this symphony too long and desire to shorten it. I do not belong to this class, and confess that whenever I hear this work well conducted, or conduct it myself, I always experience the most joyous sensations and become fairly intoxicated with the music. Free flying about through a clear and shining ether might perhaps arouse similar feelings. Nature has denied us this delight, but great works of art can give it.

What shall I say concerning the two movements which have been preserved for us in the B-minor symphony? Generally speaking, it is a misfortune if an author is not able to complete his work, but I might almost call it fortunate that this symphony has remained unfinished. The first movement is of a tragic greatness that, with the exception of Beethoven, no symphony-writer and Schubert himself only in some of his songs has attained. I consider the second theme, given out by the violoncellos, as one of the most majestic inspirations that was ever permitted a musician to express. That which thrilled us in the first movement as a mental strife sounds forth in the second mild and cleared up, as if the composer had already soared to the eternal realms. According to my opinion, this finale is so satisfying that I never have any desire to hear a continuation of the work after the

## Mendelssohn

first two movements. We might believe that Schubert, like Beethoven in his piano sonatas, Opus 109 and 111, wished to close with the slower movement, if we were not led to infer that a continuation was planned, since the second movement is written in a different key from the beginning. In truth, there exists an instrumental introduction and a sketch of a scherzo belonging to the B-minor symphony which, if one may judge from what exists of it, would not have reached the significance of the first movements. In greatness and strength of feeling combined with the tender lyrical element that runs like a scarlet thread through his works, Schubert appears like a noble and, as it were, womanly complement to Beethoven. His two symphonies in which his significant personality fully expressed itself, as well as the string quartets in D-minor and G-major, and the C-major quintet, stand in the above sense worthily beside Beethoven's creations.

The second great contemporary of Beethoven, the composer of "Der Freischütz," has produced remarkable works in the field of the piano sonata, but not in that of the symphony. Thus we turn from Schubert to the real symphony-writers since Beethoven, and first of all to the clever and elegant Felix Mendelssohn. It may be said of him that he gives the lie to the German proverb, "No master falls from heaven." He who at the age of seventeen, when most of us are merely stepping out of childhood, composed the "Overture to the Midsummer Night's Dream," is indeed a master fallen from heaven. When we think of the elves

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which Weber showed us in "Oberon," we must agree with Wagner, who, in reference to the "Midsummer Night's Dream Overture," said that those were not elves but midgets. But the formal perfection and conscious certainty of invention and workmanship which the composer showed in this overture, as well as in the string-octet written even earlier, — which is a perfect masterpiece in the melodious treatment of string instruments, — elicit our astonished admiration, and have been attained at such an early age only by Mozart. Mendelssohn, after he had written this piece, had nothing more to learn about form. What he would have had to possess to create works equal to those of his predecessors, he could not acquire. For Mendelssohn's peculiar genius demanded that it should have been born in him, and it was not. An aristocratic and yet lovable nature, full of poetry and of intellectuality, speaks to us from his music and letters. Deep passion and subjectivity he did not possess. Not until four years before his death, that is seventeen years after he composed the overture, did he write the rest of the music to the "Midsummer Night's Dream." Almost all of Mendelssohn's works were composed between these two dates, and yet it seems to have been written without a break, so little difference is to be distinguished in the compositions. In contrast, compare the works of the other great masters between the writing of which a great length of time elapsed. Compare "The Flying Dutchman" with "Tristan;" Beethoven's first symphony with his seventh; Mozart's "Idomeneo" with "The Magic Flute."

## Mendelssohn

What a wonderful difference! How little did Wagner succeed in ingrafting into his Parisian version of "Tannhäuser" the language of "Tristan" and the "Nibelungen," and how creditable for him that he did succeed so little! Mendelssohn did not, like other artists, go through a period of development, a period of inner growth. From the beginning to the end of his life and works he was "a master fallen from heaven," whose easy mastery of all the technique of music assures for him still to-day the astonishment of all, those who avoid works of great passion. Whether he wrote pianoforte music, songs, symphonies, oratorios, or fragments of operas, there is always the same finished form, the same care and thought for the harmonious treatment of the orchestra, the same elegance, the same lack of passionate feeling. Two of his symphonies, the one in A-major and the one in A-minor, have come down to the present day. Both owe their origin to rural scenes, to which Mendelssohn was particularly impressionable. Thus they have this advantage over the dry "Reformation Symphony" and the "Hymn of Praise," that they sprang from some lively impulse, and therefore their effect is more animated than the other two works, which to-day exist in name only. In them, as in Schubert's symphonies, the author's individuality is perfectly expressed. The real difference between the works of these two masters is in their individuality. Raphael paints Saint Cecilia; Jan van Huysum, a little bunch of flowers. Mastery of an art must be accorded the one as much as the other. By mastery I under-

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stand especially the ability to express perfectly and continuously one's own individuality in some particular art, to which power belongs, as a very vital addition, pure technical skill, but this can and will be attained if the first-mentioned ability is there. Lying at the bottom of mastery, and expressing itself effectively in every important work of art, is a truthfulness which does not attempt to give more than it can. This sincerity Mendelssohn possessed in a high degree; therefore, even if we do not look upon him as one of the great men, we must still consider him as a very gifted and skilful musician. Hence his compositions, although they lack strong passion, possess a sympathetic perfection which quite obliterates in the consideration of his artistic personality the question of how it was done, and leaves only to be considered what it really is. His immediate followers cannot claim a similar mastery of form.

With Mendelssohn began a new epoch in music, generally known as the new-classical. Its representatives remain true to the traditions in form of the old masters, but bring into music a sentimental, mystical vagueness that, contrary to the naïve, objective method of their predecessors, calls for a subjective explanation. Knightly legends and the fairy tales of the Middle Ages spring again into life; the world of elves and spirits draws over the classical ideal of beauty a sort of ghostlike mist. The period of "Hineingeheimnissen" (hiding secrets in a work) sets in. Analogous with an almost contemporaneous period in German poetry, this new-classical epoch has been called the ro-



## Schumann

mantic epoch. Mendelssohn has always been the perfect example in his little sphere. He has always been the objective artist. Before all other musicians, in relation to the old masters, he deserves the predicate "new-classical."

The first and the most peculiarly subjective of the romanticists, if we turn now from the objective, classical romanticist Weber, is Robert Schumann. His individuality was diametrically opposed to Mendelssohn. Highly gifted as Mendelssohn was in mastery of form, was Schumann in inspiration. The former was a perfect artist, even in his early years; the latter pressed impetuously forward, ceaselessly struggling for something new and more perfect than his last endeavor, until gloomy fate fettered the power of his spirit. In the first period of his works we meet Schumann only as a pianoforte composer. Poetical pictures give rise to his compositions: he intertwines the name of his youthful love in a theme and writes variations on it; the motley scenes of the carnival give him the inspiration for one of the most spirited pianoforte pieces that we possess; Hoffmann's imaginative tales cause him to write "Kreisleriane" and the significant sonata in F-sharp minor; he represents "the two souls that dwell within his breast" by two personalities, "Florestan" and "Eusebius," and ascribes his works now to the one, now to the other. Violently abused by the critics and musicians who belonged to a guild, he formed, with friends sharing his opinions, the "Davidsbündler league," and dances roughly about on the toes of the Philistines. I may as well say at once that Schumann

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achieved his greatest significance as a pianoforte composer, as the poet of the pianoforte, one might almost say. Here he possessed the sincerity of the great masters; here he is just what he is, with no pretence of being more. New, daring conceptions speak to us from these works, and we meet, even to-day, the offerings of his rich imagination with unabated delight. His treatment of the pianoforte is also original and thoroughly adapted to the nature of the instrument as well as to the musical thought, while, on the other hand, his management of the orchestra leaves, as we shall see later, almost everything to be desired.

— At the age of thirty-one he first turns his attention to the greater forms of music, among others to the symphony. Mendelssohn's brilliant figure moving with playful ease through all the domains of music was the shining ideal in Schumann's early life and works, — much to the latter's disadvantage. In the attempt to imitate Mendelssohn, to attain the same finish, — in the endeavor, as I might say, to be classical, — his own originality suffered severely without his being able to reach his model. Throughout his life the spirit of romance and fantasy forced its way into his works, but no longer as it did in his youth. A strange and to a certain extent ingrafted element, — that very Mendelssohnian polish which he struggled in vain to acquire, — robs his later works of that spontaneity which charmed us so in his first compositions. His talent, which bore in smaller forms such precious fruit, became, without growing richer, pulled in this way and that into

greater dimensions, and therefore thinner and more thread-like; he was required to yield more than he possessed. His productivity and versatility were nevertheless astonishingly great, even in the second period of his creative work, for there is hardly a musical form which he did not attempt. Since he, apparently in consequence of his being a free-thinker, was averse to writing oratorios with biblical text, he accordingly chose secular poems, even fragments from Goethe's "Faust," for his compositions which are sort of half-way between operas and oratorios. Besides numerous songs, many of which are among our very best, Schumann wrote concertos, chamber music of all kinds, melodramas, one opera, and, as is to be expected from such a versatile artist, also symphonies. I suppose many of you will now look upon me as a heretic when I openly acknowledge that I count Schumann's symphonies as in no wise among his most important works.

✓ In his pianoforte pieces the invention of little, but very expressive, themes, which he knew how to vary and use in an ingenious manner, is very characteristic. In his great symphonies he does not succeed with these themes and themelets, however warm and beautiful the feeling may have been from which they sprang. If you examine his orchestral pieces closely, you will find that he was often forced to repeat single bars or groups of bars in order to spin out the thread further, because the theme in itself is too small for such continuation. Sometimes even the theme itself is formed through the repetition of this and that

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phrase. On account of these copious tonic and consequently rhythmical repetitions, his greater pieces for the orchestra become naturally monotonous. One can retaliate that the theme of the first movement of Beethoven's C-minor symphony is much smaller than Schumann's themes. Here is the real difference between the two: in Beethoven's work, after the first entrance of the theme, consisting of four notes, a simple melody, which makes use of the original theme only for rhythmical framework and not really for its own spinning out, arises over the pause of the first violins and the repetition of the theme in A-flat — F, and evolves from itself up to the second subject (entrance of the horns in E-flat major). But in Schumann's works the melodious flow of the composition is preserved only by the repetition of themes as such, and the taking refuge in phrases which do not grow out of the subject. This weakness of Schumann's is most apparent in the first movements, and in the finales, of his symphonies, which — with the exception of the finale of the B-flat major symphony, which is graceful in its principal theme, but not important — are conventional and noisy. Involuntarily we ask ourselves why we must always rejoice at the end of this symphony, while in Beethoven's works in a similar case the thought never arises? The reason is because in the latter's works the rejoicing follows with psychological necessity from the conquered grief, as in the C-minor or the ninth, or is already contained in the elementary ground voice of the entire work, as in the seventh symphony. In place of the great,

broad adagio of the Beethoven symphony appear in Schumann's pleasing, melodious, lyrical intermezzi, which are much better suited to the pianoforte than to the orchestra. In the main, a Schumann symphony is more effectively played as a pianoforte duet than in a concert hall. The reason lies in a circumstance which the most unconditional admirers of Schumann can scarcely avoid recognizing, — namely, he did not know how to handle the orchestra, either as director or composer. He worked almost always with the full material, but did not take the pains to elaborate the parts according to the character of the separate instruments. With almost childlike stupidity he expected to obtain fulness and strength by doubling the instruments. Therefore, the instrumentation is heavy and inflexible, the color gray against gray, the most important themes, if played according to his directions, sometimes cannot be heard, and a true *forte* is about as impossible as a true *piano*. Whenever I see the players working with all their might, and compare, as a conductor, the labor of the rehearsals and the performance with the final effect, there comes over me a feeling similar to that I have towards a person in whom I expected to find mutual friendship and was disappointed. No sign of life gleams in this apathetic orchestra, which, if given even a simple Mendelssohnian piece to play, seems quite transformed. (Schumann's symphonies are composed for the pianoforte, and arranged — unhappily, not well at that — for the orchestra. To be sure, in these works there are flashes of genius, beautifully deep

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and moving passages that recall the earliest period of the composer's work, as for example the introduction to the B-flat major symphony, which promises great power. The middle movements up to the first trio of the scherzo, which is quite meaningless and makes Schumann's weakness most frightfully apparent, are more important than the first. In my opinion, the *adagio espressivo* of the C-major symphony, with the ideal ascending and descending figure for the violins, is the best movement in all of his four symphonies.

Schumann, as an orchestral composer, appears quite different when he conceives some poetical inspiration that is congenial to him, as for instance Byron's "Manfred." Then he loses his desire to be classical; he dares to be what he is, the imaginative romanticist leaning towards the supernatural and the mysterious. In this mood, which was closely akin to his nature, he succeeded in writing a piece of music that can with all justice be called classical. That wonderfully planned and unusually lofty overture to "Manfred," in which piece he was also more fortunate in his orchestration, is his only piece of orchestral music which can be compared with that he wrote for the pianoforte. From the rest of the "Manfred" score, we can see that, under certain circumstances, even an artistic absurdity, like the melodrama, may be of overwhelming effect if a great spirit wanders within its precinct. I am thinking here above all of "The Conjunction of Astarte." This scene, if well performed by actor and orchestra, leaves in its overpowering effect no wish unsatisfied, least

of all that Manfred might actually sing. This would be worse than composing the dialogue in "Fidelio" and "Der Freischütz." I have no idea here of championing melodrama, which is rising up again in these days, and which is even cultivated and defended by Wagnerians. It would be equally foolish to condemn, for instance, "The Conjuror of Astarte" merely because it is melodrama. Especially to-day when the disintegrating mind more frequently than ever lays hold upon works of art, and a number of art principles, — the same in German as art condemnations, — which for the most part have arisen through a misunderstanding, or a senseless echoing, of Richard Wagner's prose works, are vaguely ringing in everybody's heads, ready to trip up the first independent composer, it cannot be strongly enough advised that each one shall strengthen within himself the ability to accept without prejudice the impressions offered him. It will then be much simpler to distinguish between true and false, for art principles are dead and unfruitful; it is only the work or the act of genius, that is pulsating with life, let it express itself as it will. Therefore Wagner's explanation of the "Ninth Symphony," and the place he assigned to this work in history previous to his dramas, will never be convincing, while his conducting of this symphony in 1872 created new pathways in the art of conducting, and its effect has been productive of large results.

Schumann, who always supported all ideal effort most loyally and zealously, after showing a brief interest in the greatest of his contemporaries, in

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whose glory he should have participated, turned from him first indifferently and then hostilely. Those who love Schumann should try to erase from their memories his small grumblings over "Tannhäuser." He turned from Wagner to herald a young musician, just coming into public notice through his pianoforte sonatas, with the spirited cry that here was the future Messiah of music. This young musician was Johannes Brahms.

The destiny of this artist was prefigured in Schumann's prophecy. He was to be held up as a counterweight by the enemies of the bold opera reformer, he was to be the advocate of so-called "absolute" music in opposition to poetical music, programme music, and the music of the future. In truth, Brahms owed, I do not say his significance, but a great deal of his reputation, which came to him very early, in comparison with other composers, to the unceasing efforts of a band of antagonists to the Bayreuth master who lost no opportunity of playing Brahms off against Wagner. There was no sense in this sort of rivalry, for, in the first place, in spite of Wagner's detailed treatise on the subject, the difference between absolute music which is ascribed to the symphony-writer in opposition to the composer of dramas, and other music, is not of such weighty importance as it is generally believed to-day to be. Music that one can call "absolute," in a certain sense, that is, music which is fabricated without any instigation, formal conglomerations of notes and trifling with phrases, flows often from the pen of a Philistine to art, but is not worthy of consideration



on account of its tediousness; and it is therefore a matter of indifference whether a work in question coquettes with the new-classical school, the modern, or both. <sup>1</sup> All other kinds of music, even without song or programme, betray the spiritual influence of the composer. In this sense none of our great masters were absolute musicians, — Beethoven least of all. Then there is something else that is much too often overlooked by those who use the power of position, or of influence, or of the pen, in order to be able, through the degradation, slander, or belittlement of one figure, to raise another one better suited for their purposes upon the shoulders of the party runners — yes, is too often overlooked by those who out of blind fanaticism, or from other reasons than the real esteem of what is offered them, are friends or foes of those who wish to mould public recognition according to their opinion: — namely, the slow but surely conquering strength of the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Manufactured, ungenuine success is like a rushing whirlpool caused by a heavy rain. It rushes suddenly over the spot where usually no water flows, bearing with it all that comes in its way. After a short time no trace of it is to be seen. True, genuine success is like the spring hidden deep in the earth. First it flows for a long while unnoticed, a thin thread of water, then becomes a brook, then a river, then a flood, and finds its last outlet in the sea of eternity. One may try to

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<sup>1</sup> I do not direct these remarks, and the following, against Brahms himself. One had only to know the plain, straightforward artist, to be certain that he held himself quite aloof from intrigue and flattery.

## The symphony since Beethoven

uproot the spring or dam it up, but it always gushes forth anew.

Fortunately, it is an established fact to-day that the zeal of the "Brahmsians" could not take one tittle from Wagner's greatness, and it underlies all doubt that Brahms also, in spite of the all too zealous attacks directed toward him by certain revenging Wagnerians, will receive his befitting place in the history of music. Time is the severest judge. She devours what belongs to her. Only what stands above her she cannot touch. Just how far Brahms belongs to the immortals we to-day cannot with any certainty decide. Unquestionably many who are not his blind worshippers would feel more sympathy for him if it were not for two reasons: first, the above-mentioned fact of his being played off successfully as a counterweight to Wagner's greatness, — which is no longer done to-day; second, the linking of the three "B's," — Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. This last was a witticism of Bülow's which, though it originated for a personal motive, has found perhaps all the more favor on that account: for, — let me speak it out now again after so many others have done so, — Bülow never would have made it for Brahms's propaganda but for his breach with Wagner, so painful to himself and so lamentable for all future encouragement to art. In this instance a great, and, in the depth of his soul, a noble man fell into the error, so often committed by small and malicious natures, of making sport of one artist's fame in order to stifle the fame of another. If one reads Bülow's letters, and compares them with

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what he said and effected in the latter years of his life, it is impossible not to lament that such a character and spirit as his stood off from Wagner's work, and hence from the new development of music in general, just at the time when he was especially needed there. If, in the case of other great artists, the struggle with which they were forced to pierce their way through the misunderstanding and stupidity of their contemporaries, causes a holy light to enshroud their figures, one will remember unwillingly in the case of Brahms — be it granted that he took no active part in this game — that he was on the one side supported by a party, and on the other by a famous conductor, whose slightest whims brought about a thousand adherents, and that both of these endeavored to raise him up in opposition to an artist far greater than he. In the following I will try to picture the impression which his compositions alone have made upon me.<sup>1</sup>

When Brahms presented his first symphony, there went forth the cry from the camp of his friends, "This is the tenth symphony." Of course Beethoven's tenth was meant by that. Allowing for all exaggeration, there still remains for me in Brahms's C-minor symphony a masterly

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<sup>1</sup> I expressly wish to state that I am no longer fully agreed with the following criticism of Brahms. The weaker works which could be affected by it are by far in the minority. I look up to most of the others in love and admiration. If I now, in spite of this fact, leave the following remarks for the present unchanged, so I consider it only honorable openly and frankly to confess my error. — F. W.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. — This note does not appear in either the German edition of 1898 or 1901. It was sent me by the author with the request that it be inserted in my translation. — M. B. D.

## The Symphony since Beethoven

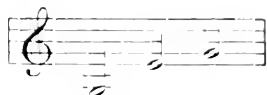
worked-out piece of music of inflexible, austere character, which corresponds much more with my idea of a symphony than Schumann's and also is much more skilfully orchestrated. I esteem chiefly the adagio, and above all the beautiful, slow introduction to the last movement; the horn, that after the gloomy minor sounds through the tremolo of the strings in C-major brings out a very intense effect, just like the sun gleaming through the rising morning mist. Brahms drew back from the often vague romanticism of Schumann, and sought to approach the energetic and plastic mode of utterance of the old masters; above all, of Beethoven. He succeeds in attaining a certain resemblance in the first and last movements of his C-major symphony, a resemblance similar at any rate to that which a concave mirror gives of our face. The second symphony in D major I place high above the first. In none of his other works does Brahms's spring of invention flow so freshly and spontaneously as in this one; never before or afterwards did he handle the orchestra so sonorously. The first movement is, from its beginning to its end, a masterpiece. The second, a slower movement, can be satisfactorily comprehended only after frequent hearing. It is difficult for it to disclose itself to the musical mind, but it does it thoroughly in the end. If I may be allowed the comparison, I should like to suggest a Dutch landscape at sunset. The eye at first sees nothing but the sky over the wide, wide plain; heedlessly and almost wearily it lets the glance pass over it. Gradually a feeling arises, quietly, from afar, and speaks to

## Brahms

us. The intermezzo, in the form of a minuet, is a graceful trifle almost too insignificant for the other three movements. The finale gives a powerful close to this work, which I esteem above all four of Schumann's symphonies, — in fact even count among the best symphonies which have been written since Beethoven in the new-classical school. As in the case of Schumann, I consider Brahms's last two symphonies inferior to his first ones. In these works reappears, according to my opinion, a subtle element, arising more from reflection than from real artistic feeling, which is peculiar to Brahms, and from which he could never quite free himself. I would like to speak more in detail of this. I will remark right here that I prize certain other works of Brahms in the same degree as the second symphony, — as, for instance, the "German Requiem," several songs, the "Song of Destiny," and portions of his chamber music, — but I must add that these works are free, at least more than the others, from that pondering element which clings to Brahms's creations and which soon became a mannerism with him. By this special mannerism of Brahms, I understand certain means which occur again and again in the construction of his compositions. A favorite device with Brahms is syncopation: that is, displacing the bass against the rhythm of the upper parts, or vice versa, so that the one hobbles, as it were, after the other. This syncopation is a peculiar thing. Think of a simple melody, consisting of crotchets, with a harmonic accompaniment, and then let the bass notes not come exactly with the corresponding notes of

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the melody, but always a quaver behind; then the whole will assume a very strange and learned aspect, without gaining in intrinsic value. It is just as if some one were to make a most solemn face to say the most simple thing in the world. Furthermore, Brahms loved to combine a rhythm of two beats with one of three beats, thus producing a form which, if used on a long stretch or often, causes a feeling of disagreeable vacillation. Another of his mannerisms is to let the upper voice, or oftener the middle parts or the bass, be accompanied by thirds, or still oftener by sixths, and then again to mix up the parts with artificial syn-copation. Entire sections of his works are built up in this way. There are certain tone-combinations, and indeed actual themes, made from the fifth of the common chord, together with the third above, — always avoiding the keynote, — which we come across so frequently that a clever *causeur* recently pointed out the phrase



as the “Brahms leit-motif.” If you look for these mannerisms in Brahms’s various kinds of compositions, you will find my statements confirmed, even though many of you will not agree with my deductions. Indeed, I believe that the complicated character of the harmony, rhythm, and melody, (which, by the way, is called by his partisans “depth of meaning”) resulting from these mannerisms,

## Brahms

and which destroys the clearness of the musical impression, is the reason why so many of Brahms's works leave the impression of being artificial and unnatural, and fail to please in spite of all the masterly technical construction. Nor can it be denied that this very complicated character of the works produces a certain monotony which is in marked contrast to mere simplicity. At all times, and from every point of view, simplicity will have a happy, animated effect; it will ever appear new and young; we admire it even to-day in Haydn and Mozart after a century has elapsed. But monotony, particularly if it comes from excessive complication, will first attract our thought and investigation, but then tire us, and at last produces that dangerous and art-killing poison, feared by all as greatly as death, — the poison of boredom. Seldom are Brahms's compositions really simple, but when they are, they are always beautiful, — for instance, the "Feldeinsamkeit," the "Sappische Ode," and the first movement of the "German Requiem." But if we receive the impression that he was trying to write simply, in which case the endeavor to strike a popular tone becomes conspicuous, then the invention is insignificant, and reminds one of the weaker "Songs without Words" by Mendelssohn; for example, I refer to the C-minor movement of his third symphony. A French critic has written of Brahms: "Il travaille extrêmement bien avec ses idées qu'il n'a pas." This assertion is doubtless too severe; but if, after noble thoughts and periods, the composition is distorted by syncopation, by continual combi-

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nations of unequal rhythms, and by those curious additions of thirds and sixths, and then here and there comes in that artificial simplicity, one receives the impression that the composer wished to stop the flight of his own genius, and, fearing the betrayal of his innermost feelings, preferred to clothe himself in silence and rather let the listener divine what he wanted to say, than actually say it.

It is a bad sign when a composer can be convicted of a mannerism. Who could do this with the great masters? How similar Haydn's compositions are, and yet how different; what a gulf lies between "The Marriage of Figaro" and "The Magic Flute!" Who could speak seriously of a Beethoven or a Wagner mannerism? Let any one who does not believe this, attempt to parody the great masters; that is, to present to us in an exaggerated way whatever their mannerism is supposed to be. He would either not succeed, or else only very clumsily, as do those who, for example, work Wagner themes into quadrilles or marches — which is blasphemy, but not parody. But it is very easy to write a parody on Brahms, and it has already been done very brilliantly by Moritz Moszkowsky. The same may be said of actual imitation. When we hear modern chamber music, written in Brahms's style, oftentimes, if we did not know the composer's name, we would accept it in good faith for a piece by Brahms himself; while I believe that no one hearing under similar circumstances a piece out of an opera of one of our "New German" composers would confuse it with one of Wagner's.



## Brahms

I have not contented myself after the custom of many Wagnerians, to stop my ears and sneer, in imitation of respective places in Wagner's collected works, whenever I am confronted by the artistic personality of Brahms. I have gone over and studied deeply the greater part of his works. When I dissected this kind of music my intellect always grew. I admired the work and the construction, and found therein the same joy that a physician perhaps feels when he lays bare the muscles of a beautifully developed dead body. If I let it work upon me as a whole, I experience, except by the works already mentioned, that sickening faintness that must come over the same physician when he dares to wish to bring to life again the corpse which he has but just dissected.

Brahms is always a master of form. His works appear in faultless technical perfection. But warm, pulsating life I have discovered only in a few of them, but these are, indeed, the more valuable because in them beautiful thoughts are united with perfect form, and one feels at once that it was permitted the author to pour forth in a happy hour a free utterance of his individual nature. What was it that hindered him so often from expressing himself in this way? This seems to me to be the answer: he believed himself to be what Schumann had prophesied and what his later partisans constantly claimed him to be, — "the Messiah of absolute music," the "successor of Beethoven." Incidentally, while speaking of his first symphony, I have already pointed to an exterior resemblance to Beethoven. We see also many a

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time how he strove, without falling into reminiscence, to imitate the peculiarities of style of the last period of the master's works, those bold, severely harmonic transitions, those manifold rhythmic combinations (which became in the case of Brahms his typical syncopation), and those often apparently scattered melodious steps. But it was never permitted him to attain to Beethoven's profoundness, which the artist must possess within his own nature. Brahms could only assume the mask. Thus in his works, in spite of the outward similarity, we find only the abstract idea, while in Beethoven's is revealed the real essence of music. Brahms's music as a whole — if I may be allowed the expression — is scientific music, a playing with tone forms and phrases, but not that most expressive and comprehensible world-language which our great masters could and had to speak, that language which arouses us and strikes to our very souls, because we recognize in it our own selves with our own joys and our own sorrows, our own struggles and our own victories. Their music is artistic. Brahms's is artificial. It is not akin to Beethoven's, but lies at the opposite pole, — is just what Beethoven's music is not. Its character is, therefore, really more abstract, repelling those who would approach, and stimulating the intellect more than the feelings. It is a characteristic experience of mine that those works of Brahms which attract my attention as being his most remarkable productions are by no means considered as the best by strong "Brahmsians." They point out among others the "Triumph-lied," the fourth

## Bruckner

symphony, the clarinet quintet, which are to my mind bare tone-scaffolding. And just this cool style of composing, oftentimes showing a marked tendency for a feeling no longer free, but reflective and mannered, as well as the fact that Brahms went out of his way to avoid any purely sensuous charm of sound, either in melody or instrumentation, that gave him the reputation of having escaped the erroneous ways of the modern composers. ✓

He is probably the last great artist who will deserve this reputation. New thoughts about music have come from another side, new inventions have broken paths through for themselves, new composers have taken up the struggle with the guardians of the classic ideals of form. We may say to-day that these last were in the end the victors. Before we turn our attention to the so-called "modern school," I must mention several isolated artists who were certainly influenced by that school but who did not belong to it, and stand, therefore, as connecting-links between the two schools.

During the last ten years many a time there has been mentioned the name of a powerful rival in connection with Brahms,—a rival who arose in Brahms's second home-city, Vienna, which seems destined to be the city of symphony-writers. Anton Bruckner, although he was much older than Brahms, came into public recognition much later. His reputation was by no means general, but rather confined itself to a special party. What attracts us in this composer is his wealth of invention, the

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pregnancy of his themes, and the astonishing long-windedness of his melodies. He was a richly talented musician. One would almost be tempted to compare him to his great compatriot Schubert in this respect if he had only produced some work which kept on a uniform level of excellence so as to be truly called a masterpiece. This is not the case, for, unfortunately, his ability to utilize his inspirations, to bind them one to another, and so build up the composition organically, did not keep pace with his inventive powers. I cannot share the opinion of his pupils and admirers, that he was a great master of counterpoint. He may have been so as a teacher; but in his compositions the purely technical part is often awkward, the polyphonic texture of the parts often doubtful and lacking in clearness, and the organic structure always inter-broken. His wonderful themes are more like pearls strung on a string than organically connected. This is why Bruckner's power usually deserts him in the finales of his symphonies, which should contain the climax, and causes the last movement to be inferior to the others, which is not favorable to his success. This also explains the breaking down, fragmentary manner of his compositions, — a manner which does not admit of pure enjoyment. One is almost inclined to wish that he had had fewer inspirations, but that the structure of his creations had been more logical, uniform, and carried out with a more definite aim in view. \*Often the noblest thoughts flutter away into an ineffective nothingness because they come into being but are not worked out. This is the more irritating since

## Bruckner

his themes resemble Wagner's dramatically symbolic motives. Could they but have been worked out psychologically by a masterly hand, Bruckner would have stood before us a shining light and led us on to make comparisons. Bruckner also lapses into mannerisms. Endings over an oft repeated bass passage, — in imitation of the close of the first movement of the "Ninth Symphony," — certain peculiarly empty-sounding passages (his admirers call them passages soaring far from the world) in his slower movements, thematic figures, with a simultaneous sounding of these same figures in the counter-movement as if they had worn themselves out playing, and, finally, those unbearable general pauses and breathing pauses which for the most part give the impression that he has lost his way, are mannerisms found in all of his works with which I am acquainted.

What elicits our sympathy for Bruckner both as man and artist, and also what had a great deal to do with his future reputation, was his large idealism, a characteristic altogether too rare in our day. Think of this schoolmaster and organist, risen from the poorest surroundings and totally lacking in education, but steadfastly composing symphonies of dimensions hitherto unheard of, crowded with difficulties and solecisms of all kinds, which were the horrors of conductors, performers, listeners, and critics, because they interfered sadly with their comfort. Think of him thus going unswervingly along his way toward the goal he had set himself, in the most absolute certainty of not being noticed, and of attaining nothing but failure

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--and then compare him with our fashionable composers, borne on by daily success and advertisement, who puzzle out their trifles with the utmost *raffinerie*; and then bow in homage to this man, great and pathetic in his naïveté and his honesty. I confess that scarcely anything in the new symphonic music can weave itself about me with such wonderful magic as can a single theme or a few measures from Bruckner. I am thinking, for example, of the beginning of the "Romantic Symphony." To be sure, this magic diminishes in the course of the work, and vanishes more and more as one studies the piece, for great and beautiful sentiments continue to satisfy us only when they are presented in artistically perfect form. In the strife between the Brahms and Bruckner factions in Vienna I was once asked my opinion of the two men. I replied that I wished that nature had given us one master in whom the characteristics of both composers were united, -- the monstrous imagination of Bruckner with the eminent possibilities of Brahms. That would have given once more a great artist.

Here honorable mention must also be made of an artist quite worthy of celebration, who was related to Bruckner in his high idealism, and who, according to my opinion, stands higher as a writer of one-act operas than as a dramatic or symphonic composer. I refer to Alexander Ritter, the friend and nephew of Wagner.

Of other German composers I mention next that most prolific writer, Joachim Raff, whose principal works are his poetic symphony "Im Walde" and

## Foreign Composers

the romantic "Leonore ;" Robert Volkmann, who in his B-minor trio above all others has created a work of first rank; Felix Dräsecke; and Hermann Goetz, who died so young, and who in fineness of feeling was akin to the poet-musician, Peter Cornelius. It is incomprehensible to me how his delightful comic opera, "The Taming of the Shrew," has vanished from the repertoires of the opera-houses as completely as his F-major symphony, which surely came from the "quiet and sacred recesses of the heart" as its motto says, has disappeared from concert programmes. What other people than the Germans would dare pride themselves of possessing among their stars of second magnitude a Hermann Goetz, and then afterwards seize those personalities tending most towards that superficiality, which is brought in with some skill and claims from foreign countries, and often neglect their own most worthy creations? Will it never be otherwise? is the question so often asked, but seldom spoken out with complaint and threat; and this is the call to those summoned for the practical answering of this question.

I must lastly refer to some important symphonies by foreign composers which up to this time have not found their deserved recognition in Germany; and the example given here by me of directing them has been little followed. The latest of these works is the symphony in D-minor by the Danish composer, Christian Sinding, a piece born of the gloomy romanticism of the North, often harsh and rugged, but having a bold, powerful *verve*. The B-minor symphony by the Russian

## The Symphony since Beethoven

composer, Alexander Borodin, is of a genuine national character, a masterpiece of its kind, and the most significant work of the new Russian school that I know. This piece is so pregnant and characteristic that I always feel as if one merely from hearing this music must get a picture of Russia and her people, even if one had never visited that land. As far as regards public recognition, the French composers, César Franck and Camille Saint-Saëns, have fared much better. The former has created in his D-minor symphony a significant work; the latter has acquitted himself happily and successfully in the line of symphonies and symphonic poems. At a somewhat earlier date Vincent d'Indy, who was influenced by modern German art, produced some noteworthy things in France. The compositions of the young Russian, Alexander Glazounow, offer much that is interesting. A talented maiden-attempt in the symphony has come from the hand of Joseph Suk. Carl Goldmark's "*Ländliche Hochzeit*" (a country wedding) has found considerable circulation. Those are not peasants that we see in this composition, but spoilt townfolk who have conceived the idea of celebrating the wedding of a bridal pair of their acquaintance in the country. Often we perceive the perfume of the drawing-room in those sounds which are supposed to be pastoral. Aside from this, Goldmark's work is a brilliant, interesting piece of music, worthy of performance and of universal applause. Let me also notice A. Rubinstein's honest endeavor to awaken the classic symphony to new life. Only once, however, in some



## Tschaikowsky

of the movements of his "Ocean Symphony," has he succeeded in rising above the dull stringing together of musical phrases. With immense success the "Symphonie Pathétique" of Peter Tschaikowsky has made its way through the concert halls of Germany during the last four years, calling attention also to the earlier works of this composer. It resembles an effective drama, rich in exciting and fascinating situations, and its effect upon the public never fails. It is said that Tschaikowsky himself feared that it never would be considered as a symphony. It is true that it departs from the usual form, both in the arrangement and the construction of the separate movements. In the first movement the form may be traced, but the construction is free. The middle movements are quite concise, while the last is free again. Moreover, this comes from the adagio, which, as a rule, stands in the middle of a symphony; but the fundamental idea demanded a close which should lose itself in gloomy darkness. It is said that the foreboding of death guided the composer's pen as he wrote this work; he therefore departed from the usual form for the sake of a poetical idea.

It may serve for a definite purpose in the second part of this book to turn our attention to a consideration of the so-called modern school, and writers of programme music.

About the time of Beethoven's death there arose among our Western neighbors in France a remarkable artist, whose greatness and far-spreading significance in music have been recognized only

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for a comparatively short time. — namely, Hector Berlioz. The most remarkable of his early pieces, the “Symphonie Fantastique” (Opus 14a), is so original that we are not surprised, considering the common tendency arising everywhere to denounce the new, rather than prove its worth by careful investigation, that such a work was looked upon as a monstrosity by such eminent men as Cherubini, and was absolutely incomprehensible to the general public, upon whom it rather made the impression of a violent fright. Berlioz, during his lifetime, obtained much the same effect with his later works, although Liszt’s untiring efforts at length won some consideration for them in Germany. It was not until long after his death, through repeated and excellent performances, first by Bülow and later by others, that the high worth of his compositions became felt and understood, in spite of the many external peculiarities. At last the sweet kernel has been found within the rough shell.

If we ask ourselves, with Berlioz’s intimate friends, how it was possible for such inspired works, which are now so universally admired, to have been looked upon for decades as the productions of a half-diseased mind, we find three possible explanations. At first acquaintancè Berlioz’s musical invention appears reserved and unapproachable. None of his melodious phrases bear a character like, *e.g.*, the celebrated clarinet melody in the “Freischütz Overture,” or like Schubert’s themes which irresistibly bewitch the ear and heart of the listener. We imagine at first

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that we find a coolness and even a harshness in those very strains which are seeking to express passion and consuming fire. Berlioz's music reminds one of those rare human physiognomies which appear unsympathetic until, after closer observation, we discern the mental storms and struggles of which those angular features, those deep, scarred furrows, and those sad, weird eyes give testimony. Any one who has studied a good picture of Berlioz will understand my meaning. Another reason why he remained for so long a time misunderstood is his abnormal and grotesque boldness in instrumentation. Not only does he bring into play a larger number of orchestral means than usual, but his manner of using these means, the great demands that he makes upon the technical skill of the musicians, his extraordinary delicate sense for the combinations of tone color, his full appreciation of clearness in design, all these give to his treatment of the orchestra that peculiar coloring which did not exist before him and has not been imitated since. This, likewise, has induced ignorant or ill-willed critics to say that Berlioz first invented the instrumental effect and then adapted the music to it. And yet his instrumentation does not show that sensuous element which seems to carry us along on the waves of sound, as in Weber's orchestra, which was also built up with wonderful boldness as regards the various utilization of the instruments, and as it finally appears in the hitherto most perfect orchestra, that of Wagner. We are dazzled by Berlioz's orchestration, but not intoxicated; it is bright sun-

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shine upon light green leaves around which a clear, pure air is playing; the deep fragrance of the spicy shade in the pine wood is lacking. The third cause which renders the understanding of Berlioz difficult lies in the materials and poetical subjects which he chose for his works, as also in the relation in which his music stands to those subjects, and the way in which it illustrates them.

Let us first consider the "Symphonie Fantastique." Berlioz has headed it with a programme which describes each of the movements separately. This is an indication of the poetical tenor that the listener is to bear in mind the while the symphony is being played. This proceeding was in no wise extraordinary. It would be very gratifying if some musical historian would establish the fact once for all that what is lightly called "programme music," nowadays, is by no means an invention of modern composers. The endeavor to express definite thoughts, yes, even events, by music is, apparently, as old as music itself. We find compositions bearing titles and explanations among the old Dutch and Italian composers just as frequently as with the German masters before Bach. Thayer, in his excellent biography of Beethoven, mentions a number of long-forgotten compositions, dating from the beginning of the century, which either bore titles for the whole piece, or had special names for the separate movements. — for example, general title, "The Naval Battle;" first movement, the beating of the drums; second movement, war-like music and marches; third movement, motion of the ship; fourth movement, cruising over the

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waves; fifth movement, firing of the cannon; sixth movement, cries of the wounded; seventh movement, victorious shouts of the triumphant fleet. Great battles and events of political importance have always excited the imagination of contemporary musicians. Beethoven himself did not disdain to compose a piece in honor of Wellington's victory, and in Wagner's "Kaiser March" we hear the artistic echo of the successful war. Especially important appears to us the following programme quoted by Thayer: "The delightful life of a shepherd, broken in upon by a thunder-storm, which, however, passes over, and then the naïve joy on that account." Who does not here recognize the suggestion for a pastoral symphony? Thayer adds the very fitting comment, which is also very significant in regard to the so-called progressive artists of to-day, that it was not so much Beethoven's ambition to find new forms for musical presentation as it was to have his compositions excel in those forms which had already been developed. Every good opera overture has its programme, namely, the text-book of the opera which is to follow; and Spohr has not hesitated in his overture to "Faust" to add, besides that, a detailed description of the subjects he wishes a listener to imagine while he hears it. In the course of this book it will be clearly expressed that the programme is no wise a reflection on the composition for which it is supplied, unless, as in some cases, the music places itself in a false relation to the programme, so that it seems to revolt against its own nature and resolves into non-music.

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Berlioz's "*Symphonie Fantastique*" is said to represent the feverish dream of a young artist who, in despair at having been refused by his beloved, has poisoned himself with opium. The dose, too small to kill him, produces in his mind first pleasant and then later horrible images. The separate movements, explained more in detail through the programme, are named. — "Dreams and Passions," "A Ball," "Scene in the Country," "March to the Scaffold," "Witches' Sabbath." Later Berlioz added a second part "*Lelio*," a melodrama, incomparable in worth to the symphony. In this he lets the artist awaken from his sleep and speak, and turning again to his occupations find release from the grief of love. Imagine how baffled a public of that day must have been at the bold attempt to express in music so unheard-of a subject. And yet how grandly Berlioz has succeeded in doing the apparently impossible without in the least violating the form of the symphony or falling into empty tone-painting. All five movements are perfect pieces of music, ingenious and powerful in invention, construction, and instrumentation, and needing no further explanation for their right of existence. When Berlioz became more certain of the purely musical perfection of his work, he said that the programme might be omitted, for the work must be comprehensible without it; he asked only that the names of the separate movements might remain. A listener, endowed with a little imagination and knowing that the third movement was called a "Scene in the Country," would easily discover at the close, where the cantilena

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of the English horn is accompanied by a soft roll on the drums, that the composer intends to imitate a tune played on a shepherd's reed, interrupted by distant thunder; this is similar to Beethoven's "Scene by the Brook," where the songs of the birds are imitated. In both cases this imitation of nature is by no means inartistic, a reproach flung at Brahms and even at Beethoven in his time, for it springs from the absolute underlying mood of the whole composition, and could only come from a soul highly capable of appreciating the wonders of nature and then giving them out again in artistic form. In both cases the closing measures, which imitate nature, are musically and logically connected with what goes before, and are therefore perfectly intelligible from the music alone without the programme. In the case of Berlioz the imitation of nature gives the opportunity for an especially beautiful and formal rounding off of the whole. The opening of the movement, before the entrance of the real theme, is already formed by a duet of two shepherd's reeds (oboe and English horn), and the end seems to be only a varied repetition of the beginning. For the last movement the title "Witches' Sabbath" would have been quite sufficient, for the movement consists of an introduction which prepares one for the weird character of the piece, of a chorale executed by deep wind-instruments (a sort of parody upon the "Dies Irae"), and a splendid fugato culminating in the combination of the chorale with the theme of the fugue. It is only a question whether the public, knowing only the titles of the five

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movements, would be able to discover the internal relation between the first three and the last two. The programme, which explains that the whole work is only intended to be the picturing of an ecstatic dream, may be freely used at performances, because the thoroughly musical character of the symphony guards the listener against inartistic interpretations, and only excites his fancy, which in reality is the true object of the title.<sup>1</sup>

If we examine more closely the musical contents of this work, we will find that one theme runs through all five movements, — a decided deviation from earlier symphonies. In his dreams, represented musically in the symphony, the figure of his beloved one incessantly pursues the young artist in varied forms and surroundings. It assumes the character of a melody called by Berlioz an *idée fixe*; and this melody while retaining its structure, as concerns the mutual relation of intervals, is changed in rhythm and expression to suit the situation about to be represented. The *idée fixe* appears in noble simplicity in the first movement (score, page 8).<sup>2</sup> In the second movement, entitled "A Ball," it is represented in waltz-time, yet without losing its stateliness (score, page

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<sup>1</sup> Liszt, in his pianoforte arrangement of the "Symphonie Fantastique," has changed the programme, stating that the first movements represent actual events, and only the last two are dreams. I do not think this alteration a good one, as it unnecessarily divides the work into two parts. The keen appreciator of this piece will explain the character of the last two movements as the climactic development of the underlying mood of the entire composition, rather than something new brought in from outside.

<sup>2</sup> These references are to the score as published by Breitkopf and Härtel, Leipzig.



38). Adapted to the character of the "Scene in the Country," it is changed into a pastoral melody given out by the wood wind-instruments (score, page 57). In the fourth movement it appears only as a fleeting thought to the man as he is led to the scaffold (score, page 84), and finally, in the "Witches' Sabbath," it becomes a distorted and grotesque dance-time. The beloved one has turned into a she-devil, who joins in the spectral uproar of witches and other mystic beings (score, pages 91 and 92). Berlioz did not, as some critics will always claim, build this symphony upon one theme from lack of musical invention, but the different forms of this theme are woven into all the movements which otherwise are quite independent.

The changing and transforming of a theme is nothing new. We know that the old masters, above all Beethoven and Schubert, created many of their works in the form of variations. We know also that, in our day, Brahms attained a great perfection in the mastery of this form. But the variation of a theme arising from a perceptible reason — I might say the dramatic-psychological variation — was first used by Berlioz in this symphony, and is absolutely his own creation. It is the same kind of variation which Liszt expands and perfects in his symphonic poems, and which Wagner at last uses as an intense means of expression in his dramas. These Wagnerian themes, varied psychologically in the service of the drama, have received the name of "leading motives" (*Leitmotiven*).

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This is the place to say that the name is just as unsuitable and out of taste as are most of the names of the so-called leading motives themselves. A motive that should guide us, as it were, through musical labyrinths (as such, Wagner's scores were at first considered), and which is to keep us from losing the thread, should, indeed, never change, but always be clearly recognizable to us. But Wagner's themes change continually, and enter into the most varied relations with each other, just as the emotions of the will do within our own mental life. In their Protean nature they would be but little adapted to serve as guides for the ignorant through dark pathways. But by their variations and by their combinations, which are only possible in polyphonic music, they become the true images of the *dramatis personæ*, and it is through this kind of thematic work that Wagner's drama obtains its impressive force and clearness. The "leading motives," with their strange names and their consequent guide-books (*leit-faden*), have brought about more confusion than instruction concerning Wagner's art. We often find people who think they have studied Wagner's work sufficiently when they have discovered the largest possible number of leading motives. They take the same delight in his dramas that children do in trying to find the hidden face in a puzzle picture. Others think all that is needed to comprehend a musical composition is to learn by heart the themes enumerated in the guide-books. They spend their time in useless memory-work, and gain no deeper insight into the music. Nevertheless,

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these guide-books may have furnished the means of study for intelligent readers who know how to go farther. Nowadays, however, this leading-motive system is applied to all kinds of music, even to classic symphonies, and the latest productions of this kind are the "programme-books," which are distributed in some cities at every orchestral concert. The intellectual harm they do the listener is even greater than the material gain they bring to the publisher. Nothing could be said against those written by a musician and containing music examples, particularly in case of a new work, provided we could induce the public to read them before the performance. At home there is hardly an opportunity. The time before the beginning of the concert and the pauses are filled, as a rule, with conversation. Therefore the reading begins after the performance of the music has already commenced. Observe now a group of listeners supplied with programme-books. For economy's sake, naturally two or three always look over the same book. Is it not ludicrous to see how the heads come together and how the fingers point to the music example printed in the book when that particular passage is being played! Immediately afterwards the continuation of the text is read, as quickly as possible, so that the entry of the next music example may not be missed. What value can there be in such distracted listening and insufficient reading? "The programme-books make it so easy," is the reply. This "making it easy" will eventually bring it about that the conductor will need only to "bring out" as pointedly as pos-

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sible the passages quoted in the programme-books in order to be sure of being praised for "clearness in elaborating the performance of the orchestra;" and the listener will need only know these passages in order to be able to talk about and criticise the work, to have always a quotation from it on hand, and in fact to assume the character of a connoisseur. Moreover, to spare expense the programme-books are gotten up hurriedly and superficially, so that they are of no use either to dilettantes or musicians. I lose no opportunity to point out the harm that the reading of these analyses does, and to urge such as believe that they cannot dispense with these programme-books, to read them at home in connection with the study of a good pianoforte score, but not in the concert during the music.

There is still another bad habit resulting from the "leading motives," namely, reminiscence hunting, which has become in our days so ostentatiously obtrusive. Now that it is the custom, since programme and guide-books are so prevalent, not to look at a piece as a whole, but only in fragments, few listeners endeavor, in hearing of a new work, to gain an impression of the entire piece and then turn to the details, which can only be intelligible in their relation to the whole. The themes or "leading motives," from which the piece is said to be built, are first sought out; then when these are found, or after they have been neatly extracted by some guide-book (like eyes from the head of a carp), they are compared with themes already known, — that is, with those printed as examples in other programme-books, — first of all with those

of Wagner, because he is nearest us in point of time, and is the most powerful figure of the recent past; and the younger composers must, therefore, become his disciples before they dare be followers of other masters. Woe to them if there occurs some slight similarity of notes, say C, G, for instance, in some phrase where there is also a C, G, in a Wagner theme! Woe if an upward chromatic progression can be discovered! The new theme is then immediately from Tristan and Isolde's "longing love motive;" two consecutive fourths become at once Beckmesser's "thrilling, thrashing motive," and a dotted rhythm in 6-8 time is Alberich's "furious forging motive;" finally, the whole work is "woven from sacred Wagner." It is astonishing with what speed a new work can be disposed of in this way before one has had any opportunity to become acquainted with it. If nothing or little could be found in Wagner's works to render the victim suspected, then a search is made among the compositions of the little father-in-law (Schwieger-väterchen) Liszt, or of Berlioz or of older masters, — yes, even among those of Meyerbeer, or in operettas or street ditties. It would be a fine task for some experienced musician to gather together and criticise all the nonsense which has been found in these "researches."<sup>1</sup> The rem-

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<sup>1</sup> Some ingenious person, for instance, claims that the theme to which, in the closing scene of "Götterdämmerung," Brünnhilde sings the words, "Fühl meine Brust auch, wie sie entbrennt," has been taken from the vulgar ditty, "Du hast ya die schönsten Augen." There is, indeed, a similarity of notes, but how long the ear of the happy discoverer must have been! On the other hand, a short tremolo of the strings on A, E, or D, A, has sufficed to connect Brahms' "Tragic Overture" with Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony."

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iniscence hunters forget, in their half childish, half malicious joy at having found some such similarity of notes, to examine the character of the theme itself, the position it occupies, the manner of its elaboration; finally the aspect, the quality, the physiognomy of the entire work. They hear with their eyes and not with their ears. They also forget that the same sequence of tones is not a reminiscence; they forget that many items must enter in, such as time, kind of tones, expression, arrangement of the whole, and forget, above all, the recognizable and similar inner cause that calls for just this and no other sequence of tones, and proves the composer's capability for finding the right expression, and the necessity for holding to it.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, they forget on the other hand, that the whole mood of a given passage may recall another without there being discernible the slightest similarity in the succession of notes. These mood reminiscences are noticeably overlooked, and yet they are the only ones worthy of consideration, because they go much farther towards proving a composer's want of originality than do these accidental note similarities. Similarities appear everywhere and quite frequently in the masterpieces from Bach to Wagner; they have never before had any influence in estimating a work, and until to-day it never occurred to any one to want to use them thus.

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<sup>1</sup> Incidentally let it be said that one finds with especial glee reminiscences whenever one is determined to find them, but, on the other hand, is silent concerning the obvious harmonies which one prefers not to hear.

Who would have dreamed, for instance, in Beethoven's day, of pointing out his "Eroica Symphony" as not original because in the first theme the notes are similar to those in the beginning of Mozart's "Bastien und Bastienne"? The entire work was misunderstood; critics complained of lack of form, of an inflated style for dazzling effects, etc. But Beethoven would have had to have lived in our day to have been called a plagiarist because of the similarity above mentioned. Now for the first time, in these days of "leading motives" and "programme-books," is a slight similarity of sounds sufficient to condemn an entire work as plagiaristic and to give a bad start to the journalistic slaughtering which in consequence of its widespread distribution takes the place, especially in large cities, of intelligent and conscientious criticism. If a composition bears the characteristics of its author, and is perfect as a whole and as to its separate parts, then it is of no consequence if there are also some accidental notes similar to places in some other composers' works. I state this as clearly and decidedly as possible, — on the one hand, for the protection of such composers as may be in danger of losing confidence in their own gifts on account of the judgment passed upon them by the reminiscence hunters, and, on the other hand, as a warning to those who, from fear of this judgment, nervously and violently avoid every innocent similarity of sound, and thus give their work the stamp of forced originality, which is the very worst thing they can do. For the result of this is stilted, far-

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etched, and distorted conglomerations of sound, with their superficial profoundness and superfine banalities, which we meet to-day in the song as well as in the symphony and opera, and which expect to attain success if only they are cleverly and artfully done. Hence the morbid and nervous music-lovers of our time who need the strongest stimulants to awaken them for a few moments from their dreamy languor, and who close their glassy eyes immediately afterwards in slothful slumber. Indeed, I believe I am quite right when I point out this fear of not being thought original as the evil spirit which robs many of our young composers of their sense and feeling of what is healthy, strong, and true. Therefore I do not in the least fear the reproach of encouraging plagiarism when I freely and openly exclaim, "Rather an honest reminiscence than contrariety to nature!" However, it is a comforting thought that this reminiscence-hunting is only a fashionable ailment, which will vanish with time, although in the meanwhile it attacks many a wise head and although many a creative artist of the present day may die of this disease, for not every one has the strength to resist its doubtless unpleasant effects; not every one has the presence of mind to offer his brow courageously to this demon. "Fear of lack of originality;" not everyone has the sound self-confidence to meet this foolish degeneration of sound judgment with at least a shrug of the shoulder, if it does not seem necessary to him to pause and say a few strong words on the subject.

But to return to our theme. The prize for be-



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ing the real discoverer of these dramatic-psychological variations that have had a magnificent positive effect, but, as we have seen, also some negative ones, belongs without question, to Hector Berlióz. Thus he can in all justification be called the predecessor of Wagner.

Besides his pioneer work, the "Symphonie Fantastique," Berlioz wrote another symphony, in four movements, entitled "Harold in Italy." This symphony hardly attains the level of his first one. Of his other works, apart from his important overtures, "Le Corsaire," "King Lear," "Benvenuto Cellini," and "Carnaval Romain," we have still to consider the dramatic symphony, "Romeo and Juliet," and the legend, "La Damnation de Faust," which almost belongs to the domain of opera. In both these works Berlioz shows himself as the ingenious musician rather than the artist. Apparently his inner being drew him towards the opera, but the bold symphony writer and master of orchestration was not capable of making that great stride, which was reserved for Richard Wagner, — namely, to let the music of his drama grow out of the spirit of the text without troubling himself about the opera form. Berlioz selected, and composed for himself, opera texts according to the old models, and then adorned them with charming and spirited pieces of music, which are among the very best operatic music that we possess, after the classical masterpieces. He also took hold of great existing operas, such as Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," and Goethe's "Faust," and arranged them so as to serve his own purpose. This

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purpose was to open up new ways of expression for his energetic musical soul, — to create music and more music, the most beautiful, most ingenious music of which he was capable. He did not consider whether the form he chose was artistically justified. As a matter of fact, I cannot justify it from a purely æsthetic standpoint any more than I can Schumann's "Paradise und Peri." It is but a style-less mixture of different forms; not quite oratorio, not quite opera, not quite symphony — fragments of all three, and nothing perfect. In "Romeo and Juliet" a fugato pictures the strife between the two hostile houses, a long recitative for the orchestra, the meeting, interference and threats of the prince. Little choruses and solos tell of the unhappy lot of the lovers, of the power of love, of Queen Mab; great orchestral pieces depict the ball at Capulet's house, the love scene, and again Queen Mab. Thus this little episode, so unimportant in the drama, is brought in twice, while the tragic conflict, on the contrary, is entirely omitted. A chorus piece illustrates the lament of the women over Juliet's supposed death; an orchestral piece, without a vocal part, paints the awakening and tragic end of the lovers; finally, a thoroughly operatic finale describes the gathering of the crowd, Father Lawrence's sermon, and the reconciliation of the rival houses. Berlioz chooses the situations, which seem to him best suited for musical composition, without any regard for the organic connection of the whole. In "La Damnation de Faust," he lays the opening scene in Hungary. Why? During

a trip through Austria he had heard the "Rakoczi March;" he had scored it brilliantly, and was looking for an opportunity to utilize it in a larger work. This opportunity he found, curiously enough, in "Faust," and, in order to find some justification for the "March," changed the scene to Hungary. He confesses this very willingly in the preface to his work. In order to be able to compose a "ride to hell," a real "Pandemonium," he had Faust perish in that place, quite at variance with Goethe's drama, to which he otherwise, for the most part, adheres, and in which Faust is saved. But this "ride to hell" is such an ingenious piece of music that we can scarcely regret the violence Berlioz has done to Goethe's poem. The excrescence — if I may so call it — in "Romeo and Juliet," the episode of Queen Mab, has given us a wonderfully fantastic orchestral scherzo, absolutely unique of its kind. In both these works, the other symphonic pieces, with the exception of one about which I will speak later on, are also marvels of ingenious and remarkable music. I may mention the feast at Capulet's house, the magnificent and passionate love scene, and the dance of the will-o'-the-wisps and of sylphs in "La Damnation de Faust." On the whole, I consider this work, apart from the "Symphonie Fantastique," as his most significant creation. The dramatic-psychological variation of a theme is used in none of his other works, not even in the "Harold" symphony, with such a brilliant effect as in this symphony. Berlioz had a great idea, but he himself did not bring it to its greatest

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perfection. That was left for his successors to do.

His collected works, even if the last-mentioned ones seem lacking in perfection of style, have exerted a weighty influence upon musical art. He stands as the real originator and founder of the modern school, which is the leading one to-day, and whose advocates are striving, often with impetuous haste, to attain new aims and the highest possible success. Berlioz will always represent a milestone in the development of music, however that school may grow. He did not approach, by any means, that ethical depth, that ideal perfection and purity, which surround Beethoven's name with such unspeakable glory; but no composer since Beethoven — except Wagner — has enriched music with so many new means of expression; has pointed to so many new paths, as did this great Frenchman whose sheer inexhaustible fantasy only appears the more powerful and rich the more we try, through loving study, to appreciate his compositions.

Berlioz, like Schumann, opposed Wagner. In both cases we see the aversion of one great man to recognize a greater one, by no means a rare occurrence, but which causes us to remember that beneath highly talented natures lie human weakness and error; and the sting at the sight of foreign superiority torments also enlightened minds. If any artist be troubled by such feelings, let him look to one sublime example, to a man towering high above all other modern composers in this respect, — to the venerable figure of Franz Liszt.

How this man, who was himself so great, was always advancing other artists of a kindred nature, and trying to spread abroad the fame of their works; how he took young genius and talent by the hand, supporting them with word and deed, and always without the smallest advantage to himself; how often he absolutely neglected his own creations for the sake of others, — all this is a matter of history. And I believe no one, even those who take exception to his compositions, will wish to rob him of the shining crown which unselfishness and noblest love have placed, for all times, upon his head. As a man, Liszt was the king of artists.

As a composer, he surpasses Berlioz, because in the latter's symphonic work, in spite of all the free fancy, the outline of the old form is almost always visible, fettering his music; while Liszt wanders away from this form, and thus often gives his work the character of improvisation. He starts directly from the poetical subject, from the programme, and takes it alone as a guide. Sometimes he goes so far as to express certain events, or conditions of mind, in musical phrases, and places them side by side as the programme prescribes. It is true that Berlioz was his predecessor in this. I refer to the next to the last orchestral piece in "Romeo and Juliet," entitled "Romeo at the Tomb of the Capulets; Invocation, Awakening of Juliet; Frenzy of joy and the first effects of the poison; Anguish of death and parting of the lovers." Berlioz sought here to picture the details of the dramatic

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action by fragments of melody, by accents, by combinations of chords and expressive figurations, and all with such clearness that one is able to follow the scene almost bar by bar. But this piece is generally omitted at concerts because the impression it makes, even with the most perfect rendering, is absolutely confusing, sometimes even — my veneration for Berlioz does not prevent my saying this — downright ludicrous. The cause lies here, that a task is allotted music which it cannot perform. Were we not given through the title an indication of the subject of the drama, we certainly would not know what we were listening to. We would receive the impression only of a senseless confusion of sounds. But the feeling of senselessness is not removed, even when we do know from the title what images we are to bear in mind; indeed, we are astonished to notice how clear and distinct the bare words of the title are, compared with the music, which at other times is able to impress us much more powerfully than even an excellent word-poem. We experience similar feelings also in listening to the orchestral recitative at the beginning of "*Roméo and Juliet*," which is said to represent the arrival and interference of the prince. Only the tormenting impression in this case is soon over.

Here we have reached the point where the true mission of music is revealed in all its splendor. Here we see that it is an art which can never convey conceptions to us because it shows us the deepest reality of the world in the most subtle pictures, and for this reason stands high above the

other arts. Here we see that it is robbed of its majesty if the artist seeks to convey concepts by it as language does; that it is debased and shorn of the subtle peculiarities of its being if he attempts to bind it bar by bar, or episode by episode, to a programme. Music can interpret moods, it can represent a mental state that some event has caused in us, but it cannot picture the event itself.<sup>1</sup> That is the task for poetry, and, in another sense, for painting or sculpture. If this task is attempted with music, the effect is something the same as when one tries to speak a foreign language but little known to him. The result is not only incomprehensible, but also ridiculous. In such cases music has entered into the above-mentioned false relation to the programme, and then it ceases to be music. He, who can do nothing more, can in listening form in his imagination an idea of the piece of music; it will not materially injure his receptive ability, for a good piece of music stands on a much firmer, much deeper foundation than the presentation of this or that event, and speaks to us with much more power than anything else. It tells us of things from the deepest depth, of which that idea is only a copy, only an apparition; it unveils for us its secrets and makes them transparent — therein is the great importance of music in the drama. But the reverse, to take as a subject an event, be

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<sup>1</sup> I refer here to the beautiful explanation of the nature of music found in both volumes of Schopenhauer's "*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*." Musicians will not agree with certain details. But taken as a whole, the conception will never lose its significance for me.

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it physical or mental, of dramatic or philosophical content, and to wish to express it through music, in the exact order in which it happened, — the event, I repeat, and not, forsooth, its effect upon us, — is, on the one hand, a foolish and senseless undertaking, because only words, or in certain exceptional cases, a painted or plastic representation, possess this ability. Then the artist makes a mistake in the selection of his medium. He lowers a lofty and eternally noble art to a service far beneath it. Music, the language of the spirit of the universe, is used as a means of expressing often what is ordinary and vulgar, and — in case it is adopted extensively for work of such style — gives rise to a perversity of possible musical feeling which hinders the appreciation of true masterpieces. I have too firm a faith in the constantly increasing power of music, to believe in the lasting success, especially in this direction, of the newer endeavors, — hence my often criticised coolness towards a certain kind of “modernity.”

Although the orchestral piece out of “Romeo and Juliet” prepares the way for Liszt’s creations, to a certain extent, still the latter has given us works of incomparably greater value than this piece, for, in many of his compositions, he succeeded in finding an artistic form which presents them as finished creations, and these same compositions are not contrary to the nature of music, although each follows a definite programme. But this form, which Liszt invented, is fitted exclusively to the poetical subject of each particular work, and would be quite senseless if used with



another programme. Think, for example, of "Mazeppa," one of Liszt's most famous productions. A wild movement, soaring almost to madness, pictures the death-ride of the hero; a short andante his downfall; the following march, introduced by a fanfare of the trumpets and increasing to highest triumph, describes his elevation and coronation. Now think of his symphonic poem "Orpheus," the form of which really consists only of a great *crescendo* followed by a great *diminuendo*. Orpheus strikes the golden strings of his lyre, and all nature listens with devotion to the wondrous sounds. With majestic strides the god passes by us, charming the world with his personality and his playing. The tones of his lyre grow weaker. Farther and farther recedes the heavenly figure. At last it vanishes entirely from sight.<sup>1</sup> The disposition of this piece of music, commencing with the softest *pianissimo*, growing to the most powerful volume of sound, and then gradually dying away again, is surely quite justified both by itself and in its connection with the programme; but a similar piece with the title "Mazeppa" would be quite impossible. Yet I feel certain that, were we to hear "Mazeppa" and "Orpheus" without any titles, we should recognize in the former, a painfully stormy element which breaks down and immediately afterwards rises again victoriously, and in the latter, a gentle and majestic being who first approaches and then

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<sup>1</sup> The form of the composition "Orpheus" is not unlike the overture to "Lohengrin."

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recedes, without needing necessarily to think of either Mazeppa or Orpheus. Our fancy will be powerfully stimulated by the title, but not uncomfortably fettered. The chief thing will always be the musical feeling and not the petty interpretations of this or that passage, because, and in fact, especially for this reason, a positively musical power dwells within these pieces which I have mentioned, and because they owe their origin to musical feeling and inspiration, and not merely to intellectual illustrations.

This kind of programme music I defend as energetically as I condemn the other, — namely, formless extemporization on supposed underlying subjects. When Liszt, for instance, in his symphonic poem, “Die Ideale,” endeavors to interpret musically certain fragments of Schiller’s poem in due succession, and then tries to weld these renderings together into one movement, — when he even goes so far as to use for headings the different parts of the poem, which he wishes the listener to imagine during the music (so that only those who are provided with the score can know just what he is to imagine at any particular moment), — the result is that the music produces only a lame effect, because it cannot freely develop according to its nature, but is *a priori* bound to the successive fragments of the poem, — that is, to a series of conceptions. Compare this to the overture of the first version of “Fidelio,” the *first* “Leonora” overture (though always falsely called the second). Its musical value does not attain to the great one, but it is a true operatic

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overture because certain important moments of the drama are represented in it, — Florestan's imprisonment, Leonora's courageous endeavor to release her husband, her searching and inquiring, her meeting and her fight with Pizarro, her victory, a short retrospect of the horrors overcome, with feelings of gratitude towards God, and finally the exultation of the happily reunited pair. See how well Beethoven, with all his dramatic clearness, guarded in this piece the symphonic character, and with what musical means he knew how to depict the scenes. I would point out the grand and sudden entrance of C-minor in the place where the usual repeat of the first part in C-major is expected; it is intended to picture the moment of highest danger, Leonora's meeting with Pizarro. Notice how naturally, and without any violent effort, the reminiscences from the opera — the passage where Pizarro falls back before Leonora's pistol — are introduced. I should like to select this overture as a model to demonstrate just how far a certain programme is compatible with music without injuring the latter in its very nature. Mendelssohn's "Hebrides" overture and Schumann's "Manfred" overture were occasioned by poetical images and events. At one time the endeavor to express such things in music led to a coincidence of the new-classical and the modern school; indeed, composers did not seem at first aware that there were two schools to be represented, as we may see from Schumann's relations with Berlioz and Liszt. It was only with the appearance of the totally abstract Brahms and the ris-

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ing of Wagner, who soared far above all others, that people began to feel that there were two schools. When the consciousness of Wagner's power dawned upon them, the new-classical school, feeling that its last hours were come, played the trump-card — Brahms. The "schools" were well defined again, and to-day there are so many that every one feels called upon to work for one or the other. The man who belongs to no school naturally arouses suspicion everywhere with his productions, and can scarcely rely upon the sane judgment of the people, which in spite of all misdirection, finally, though often at a late day, finds out the true.

Here I must warn against a grievous error which I believe I still discover in many modern compositions; namely, the confusing of the dramatic with the symphonic style. Referring once more to Wagner's treatise "On the Application of Music to the Drama," I would add that with a few exceptions a characteristic mark of all symphonic themes is their breadth and their special melodious character, while the themes of a musical drama are distinguished by their pregnancy, and thus often by their significant brevity. On none of Wagner's themes, not even the very simplest, could a symphonic movement be built up; on the other hand, the first theme of Beethoven's "Eroica," for instance, consisting of twelve bars (not of four, as many seem to think), the melodies of Beethoven's slower movements, indeed, the themes of any true symphony, could not be used in opera. The dramatist's inventive gifts are excited to production by quite other factors than

are the symphony writer's. Persons and events which are represented bodily on the stage suggest to him those pregnant and plastic motives which reveal the significance of the events, often like lightning, and which are much more expressive than words. But moods of an inward and contemplative nature, the mental reaction after great deeds or events, real or fictitious, which do not require realization by the drama, inspire the symphony writer to create. His work is like the living — out of his very being in music (*ein Sich-Ausleben seines Wesens in Musik*); hence the breadth of the themes and the true instrumental melody, which is rarely possible in the drama. If it is admissible to designate the orchestral part of the musical drama as "symphonic," — that is, as built up in ingenious polyphony, — then a symphony may in turn be called "dramatic" if the underlying moods are very passionate and variable. The whole world is a great drama, and music shows us its innermost being. In this sense, music itself is "dramatic," as we can recognize to our satisfaction in our great hero Beethoven, to whom we always turn when we wish really to understand what music is. But the "symphonic" quality of a musical drama must be taken in a concrete sense, and the "dramatic" nature of a symphony movement in a metaphysical sense; and composers should keep this difference constantly in mind, so as to avoid the confusing of the two, which can have no other effect than the giving rise to pieces which will look more like fragments of operas than symphonies, or, on the other hand,

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the airing of symphonic pieces in operas where they do not belong. It is well worth noticing that Wagner points to the necessity of keeping strictly to the same key unless there is an imperative reason for leaving it. He explains also that this necessity applies in a higher degree to the symphony, because daring modulations, which in the drama are absolutely required by the action would be unintelligible in the symphony. There is scarcely another principle in music which is so sinned against to-day as this one, which lay in the natures of all great masters, Wagner included. Most of Bruckner's symphonies, for instance, suffer from incessant and senseless modulations, so that often one cannot tell why one is called "in E-flat major" and another "in C-minor," since only the final bars of a movement coincide with the key of the beginning, while all the other parts wander, without rule, through all the remaining keys. But I do not think Wagner is right when he rejects the varying of a theme in the symphony, — the psychological-dramatic variation, to use my expression, of a theme in a symphony, — as a "far-fetched effect." Is not the sudden entrance of the minor key, to which I referred in Beethoven's first "Leonora" overture, a variation of this kind? If in Liszt's "Mazeppa" the terrible, increasing speed of the death-ride is expressed through gradual, rhythmical — let us say almost breathless — shortening or condensations of the main theme, from 6-4 time through 4-4 and 3-4 to 2-4; if at the close of the march this theme is introduced in a triumphant manner, — then these variations are

not the result of far-fetched effects, but of a very genuine power of expression. As in the musical drama these variations are determined by the action, in the symphony they must submit themselves to the laws of symphonic form, be it the old ones or new ones which a composer, incited by some poetical inspiration, has discovered. Should I be asked for the rule of a new form of this kind, I confess I should have to reply in the words of Hans Sachs: "First make your rule, then follow it." Indeed, this following, this relentless and consistent keeping, of the rule one has made, this never deviating until all is clear, this working with the sweat of one's brow until the gradual growth corresponds to one's inspiration, without the labor and sweat being apparent, — this is what, in the end, produces a work of art. There is no merit in departing from the old form unless a definite object is attained; it is absolutely senseless to designate those keeping to the old form as reactionaries. The "Neo-Germans," the revolutionists, forget that in their zealous campaign against form, they are just as much Philistines as are the pseudo-classicists with their tirade against innovations. All depends entirely upon what the work as a whole has to express, and the form will be merely the adequate mode of expression for the content. Of course this applies only to masters, and not to every agreeable dabbler who thinks he can conceal his inability by a pathetic programme and, more than this, make us believe that it was his intention that the entire piece should hobble along in a confused, mutilated fashion.

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Other of Liszt's works suffer from the same defect as does the "Ideale," which also are inferior because less significant in their power of invention, as, for example, "Hamlet," "Prometheus," and "Héroïde Funèbre." There is a certain extemporaneous quality, which sometimes approaches raggedness, which is peculiar to most of Liszt's works. I might say that, just as in Brahms a meditative element predominates, so a rhapsodic feature gains the upper hand with Liszt, and becomes a disturbing element in his weaker works, and, I am sorry to say, even in the "Mountain Symphony," which is so rich in beautiful details. Masterpieces in which the rhapsodic element ascends to its greatest and most impressive power are, besides "Orpheus" and "Mazeppa" already mentioned, "Hungaria," "Festklänge," "Die Hunnenschlacht" (a fantastic piece of uncanny and elemental power), "Les Préludes," and, above all, the two great symphonies on "Faust" and Dante's "Divine Comedy." The "Faust Symphony" is not intended to embody musically Goethe's poem, but gives, as its title promises, three character sketches, — "Faust," "Gretchen," and "Mephistopheles." The third movement shows us with what art and imagination Liszt has used and developed the dramatic-psychological variation of a theme (the inventor of which I have already designated as Berlioz). Mephistopheles is "the spirit who evermore denies;" for the principle of his actions is, "for whatever has come into life deserves to be reduced to nought again." Hence Liszt could not give him a theme of his



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own, but built up the whole movement from caricatures of previous themes, particularly from those belonging to "Faust." For this reason ignorant critics have been even more ready to reproach Liszt than they did Berlioz for lack of invention. I ask, if our great masters have built up long movements by manifold variations of themes of a few bars, why should not a composer to-day do the same, if a perceptible poetical thought is his guiding principle? Is there no invention in these characteristic variations, and, forsooth, invention of the same degree that the old masters possessed? And just the last movement of the "Faust Symphony" best reveals to us Liszt's deep insight into the true nature of music. When the infernal, diabolical spirit has risen to its most brilliant power, there appears, as if soaring in bright clouds, the main theme of the Gretchen movement in virgin beauty. By this motive the power of the demon is shattered, and it sinks back into nothingness. The poet could let Gretchen perish, and even become a transgressor; the musician, in accordance with the ideal, subtle nature of his art, preserved for her the exalted, heavenly form. Mighty trombone sounds are heard through the discordant hell-music as it dies away; a male chorus softly intones Goethe's sublime words of the "Chorus Mysticus," — "All that is transitory is only illusion;" and in the clearly recognizable notes of the Gretchen theme, continues a tenor voice, "The Ever-Feminine draweth us on" (*Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan*). One can identify this tenor voice with Goethe's Doctor Marianus,

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and imagine Gretchen transfigured into the *Mater Gloriosa*; one might also recall Faust's words when he beholds Gretchen's image in the vanishing clouds: —

“Like a pure soul, still fairer grows the form,  
Dissolves not, but to higher realms of air ascends,  
And bears with it my nobler self, my heart, away.”

So in great pieces of music golden threads, spun from sunshine, are woven lightly and airily, between the music and the inspiring poetry, making both more beautiful, but confining neither.

Still more unified and more powerful than the “Faust Symphony,” is the tone-poem to Dante’s “Divine Comedy,” with its vivid representation of the torments of hell and its “Purgatory,”<sup>1</sup> which gradually rises into the higher sphere of pure sentiment. In both these works Liszt has given the highest art of which he was capable. They can be compared only with the creations of the great masters. They mark not only the highest point in Liszt’s work, but also, with Berlioz’s symphonies, are the ripest fruit thus far of artistic programme music. It is gratifying to know that Berlioz’s and Liszt’s compositions are constantly gaining ground for themselves, and becoming more generally appreciated, in fact, are even awakening enthusiasm, although a large number of critical reviews of their works have taken the occasion to grumble over them or insult them with

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<sup>1</sup> Acting on the wish of the hyper-Catholic Princess Wittgenstein, Liszt added a second close, indicating the triumphant church. It is very weak, and I always recommend its omission.

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their traditional air of superiority. The pseudo-classicists break their noses, and the ultra-moderns would like to treat both of these great masters as surmounted obstacles, as steps now passed over, in reaching the state of perfection where the "new gods" now sit throned. Idle endeavor! Time gives its potent judgment, without regard to the pigmies which are swelling themselves up, and strutting about in their narrow nothingness; and already it is being seen that Berlioz and Liszt are, with Wagner, the great stars in the new musical epoch, the heroes of the last half of the nineteenth century, just as Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, and Schubert were the heroes of the first.

Apart from these two symphonies, each consisting of several movements, Liszt's orchestral works have, as a rule, but one movement, and are entitled "Symphonic Poems." This name is a very happy one, and seems to me to express in two words just the law, perhaps the only law, which a piece of music must obey if it is to have a right to exist. Let it be a poem; that is, let it spring from some poetical source, from some impulse of the spirit which the author may convey to the public by title and programme, or may withhold; but let it also be "symphonic," which is here, speaking in general terms, synonymous with "musical." Let it have a definite form, either one taken from the old masters, or a new one developed from its content and corresponding to it. Lack of form in any art is unpardonable, and in music can never be excused by a pro-

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gramme, or by what the composer "imagined." Liszt's symphonic works stand for a great first step along a new path. Any writer who will go farther on this way must take good care not to imitate Liszt's weakness, that raggedness of conception which he often displays, but to compose pieces which are more than tone-illustrations of programmes.

I trust that I have made it sufficiently clear what we owe the modern school which has reached its highest development in Berlioz and Liszt, and what are the dangers that we have inherited from them. Besides the positive gain, which we enjoy in the works of these two masters, we have also learned that there are other arts and forms of composition besides those of the sonata, rondo, and variation which seem so unavoidable. It has disclosed to the imagination a rich though dangerous field of action, where precious fruit may still be reaped. As it is customary in every great revolutionary movement, that some shoot beyond the mark, so must it here also be confessed that music, while men were striving to increase its power of expression, at times was lowered from its sacred pedestal to become the slave of words and conceptions. The boundary line over which music cannot step without becoming unmusical, is very hard to recognize. We are in need of a larger number of new and significant works in order that it may be more clearly drawn. If the younger generation of our composers comes to know that music is not a language of conceptions, if it recognizes the demand for form in composition, and if

it learns strictly to separate the symphonic from the dramatic style, then we need not give up the hope of hearing, in the future, symphonies about which — to use Wagner's words — something may be said; provided that some one comes who knows all this without being told.

At all events, the modern school has been more stimulating and fruitful than the new-classical. It has become the yeast in the bread of the Philistines, and its fermentation is more and more apparent in Germany and abroad. Thus I believe that some remarkable modern symphonies, in the old form, and, therefore, belonging to the new-classical school, would not have been composed exactly as they were, if Berlioz and Liszt had not lived. I refer among others to the symphonies of Sinding and Borodin, which I have already mentioned. In our days we see also desertions from the old school to the new. Dvorak, no longer a young man, who can be considered as a pupil of Brahms, and who has attained great success with his symphonies, has suddenly turned to programme music, and is composing symphonic poems. — Some years ago we witnessed a similar conversion in the case of Richard Strauss, who was then a very young man. As a pupil of Hans von Bülow, after Bülow had deserted Wagner, he swore by Brahms, and wrote an excellent symphony of which the model is evident. Later he went over to the modern school, began a series of symphonic poems by no means finished yet, and now in the public opinion stands as the leader of the most extremely progressive school. I consider "Tod und

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Verklärung," as one of the most worthy of these symphonic poems, more so than "Don Juan," which is perhaps better known and liked. The former is a piece of spent passion, powerful both in invention and construction, and very sincere and genuine in feeling, except the close, which seems to me more pompous than glorious. A piece of equal value is the scherzo for orchestra, "Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche," which is most brilliant both thematically and instrumentally, indeed truly witty, if I may apply this word to music. In "Also sprach Zarathustra," Strauss falls into the same error which Liszt made before him with the "Ideale." Liszt intended to picture a succession of moments during which man rose from his every-day life to a higher sphere; and so in Strauss's piece a series of world conceptions passes before us, each of which attempts to solve the great secret of life, represented by the succession of notes, C, G, C. None of them succeeds, and at the end the C, G, C, stand there as obstinately as in the beginning, and doubt — the "father of truth," according to Nietzsche, the chord C, E, F-sharp, according to Strauss — may go on forever assailing it. No doubt different moods, such as religious feeling, passion, pleasure, and superhuman dionysiac serenity — remember the last movement in Beethoven's A major symphony — may be rendered musically; even granting that a fugue may symbolize science, which is barren in the solution of the final and highest questions of life, yet by the welding together of such widely differentiated moods into one move-

ment, which makes it necessary for the listener to hunt out bar by bar the thoughts — no doubt ingenious — which guided the composer, the impression of the music, in the true sense of the word, is lost. Aside from these considerations, which even the masterly treatment of the orchestra does not dispel from my mind, the positive power of invention seems to me to be less in this piece than in earlier works by Strauss. This is due, I believe, to the fact that from impulse to execution the path of the composer in this piece lay in the domain of conceptions; that is, that music is brought into an uncongenial sphere through which it always seems to be seeking the right way without ever being able to find it, and loses itself in experimentation. Strauss seems to be just as far from what I consider music in his newest works, "Don Quixote" and "Ein Heldenleben," as in "Zarathustra." With the old masters we got along without programmes; with Berlioz and Liszt a title was sufficient. Strauss finds it necessary, even before the appearance of one of his new works, to bring out an extensive explanation and guide, written by another hand. Why is this necessary if he really believes that his music has reached that elevation where it is in a position to speak to us as clearly as words? If he had accomplished this, we would be able to hear what he wishes to say to us without elucidation or programme. Then he would have reached his goal. Fortunately, at the time of the first performance of "Eulenspiegel," Strauss, confident of the musical character of this piece,

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tactfully one might say (when one recalls some of the Eulenspiegel anecdotes), avoided giving the programme. In hearing this piece, even if it were performed without its title, we would get a certain impression of being seized or preyed upon, even if we did not think of Eulenspiegel. In his later works this is the exception. No one, for instance, hearing the great violin solo in "Heldenleben," would think of a rebellious woman who was gradually won by the love of the hero, or, listening to the adventurous "wind kakophonions" of the second portion, would think of "the hero's adversary," if he did not know that this was what he was to imagine. The fact that the author himself considers it necessary previously to interest the public is evidence that the new way which he has pretended to break through is only seemingly passable, for those extensive elucidations are nothing more than an open confession that, in spite of the polyphonic art and our astonishment over the instrumentation, these creations are senseless without intellectual explanation. On the other hand, a real programme is not presented with these pieces, and thus the public is to a certain extent brought by an ambiguous way to their comprehension, in that it must first be instructed as to what it should think, and then must consider it all as a direct language. The character of incompleteness with which, on account of this proceeding, these extravagant compositions seem afflicted, and which presents itself in all the more striking a manner since their originality in regard to spiritually rich harmonies,



but in no wise in regard to original melodies and themes, can be exhorted, prevents them from having anything to do with works of genius. The truly original stands out free and independent, and strides boldly through the world. It needs no preliminary studies, and — no crutches.

Many æsthetic questions have been raised over Strauss's compositions, among others, if a flock of sheep (Don Quixote) could be represented in music. In my opinion, in this and similar cases, it is a question of *how* it is done. A mere imitation of the sounds of nature, as in Strauss's piece, can call up a recognition of the story; as, for example, a picture of a rubbish heap painted in masterly, realistic style, shows the wonderful technique of the painter. In both cases we need only the odors to make the illusion complete. A truly artistic and musical conception of a bleating flock of sheep could be scarcely less faithful than is Strauss's, but it would have to be much more full of sentiment, of humor, and music. May not one suspect in many places in Strauss's pieces, where he, apparently in accordance with the principle, "Nothing is true; everything is permissible," heaps up the ugly on top of the ugly, that the composer, — so accustomed from youth up to praise and recognition (for one cannot help being astonished at this man) that he celebrated himself in his latest tone-poem, "the hero struggling with his adversary," — that this composer now riding on the high wave of prosperity, wished to see how much he could offer the public with serious mien, before the joke was discov-

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ered? In truth, did he not try some "Eulenspiegel" in his compositions, just as, for example, Bülow, according to my conviction, here and there attempted in directing concerts? Thus it is not the harmonic and instrumental abnormalities of the first rank, but rather the deeper observations, which I have given above, that make it impossible for me to agree with Strauss in his works during the last few years. Nor can his brilliant, even phenomenal success lead me to agreeing, especially as the significance of contemporary success is but of ephemeral worth to him who directs his glance back away from the figures of our day over the history of hundreds and thousands of years.

Here I will speak of a curious feeling which I have often experienced, but which I have not found shared by others. If I hear a piece that reveals to me the weakness of the modern school, then there comes over me after a short time of attentive listening, in spite of the great external difference, exactly the same sensations that a weak work of Brahms awakens in me; the same insipid, empty, and heavy feeling of torment. Does this similarity of effect lie in the fact that Brahms's music appears to me as the conception of music, as opposed to its essence, while in the programme pieces conceptions — as opposed to the essence of things — are intended to be expressed? May it be that the erroneous and artificial products of both schools are closely related after all, as is undoubtedly the case with their great productions? Perhaps, from a very high point of view,

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there are not really two schools, but only one. Time alone can tell.

As I spoke before of an older and a younger composer, I may mention two other artists in the same purely external connection. Standing under the direct influence of Liszt, Friederich Smetana, a Bohemian, wrote a series of six symphonic poems. He gave them the collective title, "Mein Vaterland," as he had found his poetical impulse in Bohemian folk-lore. I mention as especially valuable "Vltava," and then "Vysehrad" and "Aus Böhmens Hain und Flur." The first mentioned is an especially beautiful example of how far a prescribed programme is compatible with music. An interesting figure of our day, but far too little esteemed as a composer, is Gustav Mahler. His works are of colossal dimension, and require an unusually large number of executants, which makes more difficult their performance and reputation. But if we overlook these considerations, which, after all, are secondary, and turn to the composer himself, we find in him deep, strong feeling which has its own mode of expression, and which says what it has to say quite unconcerned about the possibilities of performance and success. Mahler's most striking characteristic is the remarkable breadth of his themes, as well as their thoroughly musical nature. In many points he is like his teacher, Bruckner, only he understands better how to work with his themes and how to construct his movements. There may be bizarre passages, there may be needless difficulties in his works; we may notice a certain prolixity, and,

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perhaps, a want of severe self-criticism in the selection of his themes; but everything that Mahler writes bears the stamp of a rich imagination and of a passionate and a vivid, almost fanatic enthusiasm, which always has awakened my sympathy.

I have now spoken of the modern composers also, chiefly of Strauss and Mahler, who, standing still in the middle of their creative work, lead our thoughts on from the present to the future. Whether there will come an artist, who in his own way can carry on further the work of Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner, and worthily bring to a close the ranks of our great geniuses, no one to-day can tell.

But we need not hinder our imaginations from picturing him as he would appear in our day. I think of him first as independent of all parties, and not meddling with them because he is above them. I think of him, not narrow-mindedly German nor yet cosmopolitan and shallow, but having a strong, purely human feeling, because music is a universal art. I picture him inspired with a glowing enthusiasm for what the great minds of all times and of all nations have produced, and having an invincible aversion to mediocrity, with which he comes in contact only through his own kindness. I think of him as free from envy because conscious of and trusting in his own worth, far above any mean ways of advertising his own works; profoundly sincere, and, where needful, even indifferent — hence not a great favorite in many places. I imagine him not anxiously avoiding social in-

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tercourse, but with a tendency towards seclusion — not hating men in exaggerated world-grief, but despising their meanness and narrow-mindedness, and so choosing only special persons for his daily intercourse. I think of him as not indifferent to success or failure, but refusing to allow either to alter his course by a hair's breadth; very indifferent to so-called public opinion, and politically a republican in Beethoven's sense. I see him wandering, as it were, in an Alpine region where the clear white mountain-tops greet us kindly, but yet are awe-inspiring, with his gaze constantly fixed on the highest peak, toward which he is always advancing. Although he feels himself akin only to the greatest geniuses, still he knows he is only one link in the chain and that other great men will succeed him. So he belongs, indeed, to a school, but to one which soars over the heads of humanity and vanishes.

If we come down to reality after this flight of our imagination, we recognize that we are living in an interregnum, in a period of transition. Everywhere we notice a pulsating, restless activity, an uncertain groping after dim objects, a hankering for success and celebrity at all costs and by any means. "Progress," "Neo-Germanism," "hitherto unheard-of originality," "precursor," "epigone," "eclectic," "founder of a new school," "superseded standpoint," — these are many of the catchwords which strike our confused ear. Now we hear of a new tone-poem in comparison with which the works of Wagner, Liszt, and Berlioz are but the productions of pigmies; there

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the true popular vein is said to have been rediscovered. As in a *Fata Morgana*, the new pass before us, fade, and die away. An almost frivolous admiration of the willful, the irregular, the ugly, has manifested itself in many places. Where formerly every Philistine crossed himself before every "tritonus," and eagerly searched for every "in-harmonic relation," nowadays they sanction every harmonic absurdity, calling it a "bold act," if only it occurs absolutely without reason; and he who has accomplished the most along that line is styled a "reformer!" No doubt in the midst of all this confusion, the great, the truly new and original, is silently preparing, but far away from the art market. Its appearance will be a question of personality and not of education. The artist cannot live far from the activity of the world. He must get his ideas, his inspirations, and the plumb-line for his work from life. Will our present most intense, nervous, and strenuous existence let some soul develop within, in the midst of all the press and drive, that degree of intuitiveness and poise from which alone great works of art, stamped neither more nor less with the fad of the day, can come? Will — without reaction — that loftiness without pathos, that charm without coquetry, that strength and sweetness of spirit, by which our great masters were characterized, return to-day upon the basis of the modern philosophy of life? In this age of invention and mechanics is an art possible that, standing as far above all time as everything really great does, is still the child of its time?

## Conclusion

The answer to this question must be left to the future.

Meanwhile we may reach firm standing-ground in the conviction that true progress will not come from the outward but from the inner man. If an artistic production is the result of speculation only, and not of an inspiration, it may dazzle us, but will never truly interest or permanently fascinate us. Those who share with me this conviction will cry out to the gifted and ambitious composers: Let your feelings, your thoughts, your ideas, be great and noble, as great and noble as those of our great masters; then you will produce the right kinds of works, and just as you produce them, they will be right. And if you cannot do this, then mount Pelion upon Ossa, write for a thousand trombones and for two hundred thousand kettledrums; nothing will result but a bogey. Brilliant technicality is not enough. Naturalness, straightforward and powerful sincerity, — that is what we want. Write down without fear what your spirit impels you to write, and express what must be expressed. Then it will be an image of yourself, an expression of your own nature. Have, moreover, the courage to remain what you are, even if you are misjudged or “torn to pieces.” Only do not think that a “Ninth Symphony” or a “Nibelungen tetralogy” will result from your attempts. The world will be very thankful to you for an opera in the style of Lortzing, or for a symphony such as Hermann Goetz has written, provided what you have composed is genuine and not artificial. Do not imagine that

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every one of you must be "superhuman" if the misunderstood teachings of Zarathustra ring in your ears and set your brain in feverish agitation. To only a few is it permitted to wander on the highest summits of humanity, and this "superhuman" state cannot be constructed, learned, or acquired. That endowment comes only as a transcendent gift from the regions above. "From which?" you eagerly ask. Well — from that region which only he would deny who has never felt its breath wafted across to him! — Be it a little song or a great symphony that you compose, it will only be a masterpiece if it deserves the same motto that the great Beethoven wrote on the score of his "Missa Solemnis:"

"Von Herzen — möge es zu Herzen gehen."

FELIX WEINGARTNER.









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